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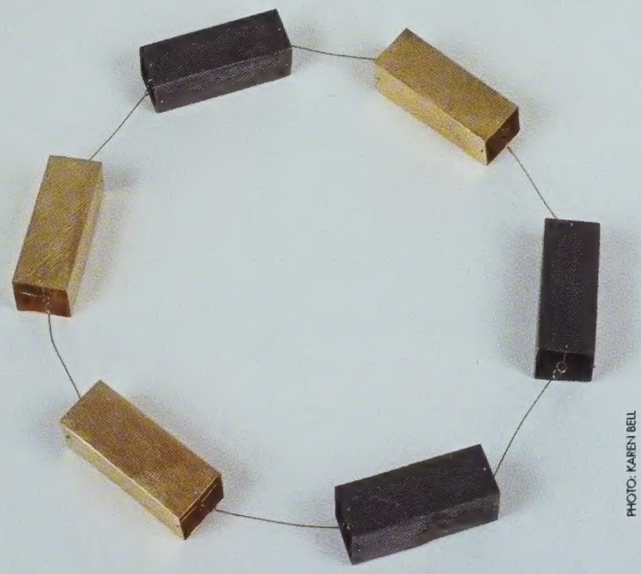

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Stefano Marchetti, necklace 18ct gold, neillo, 2000

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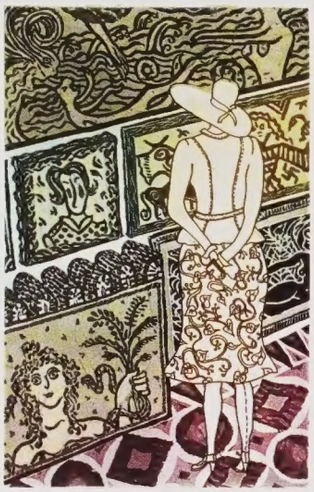

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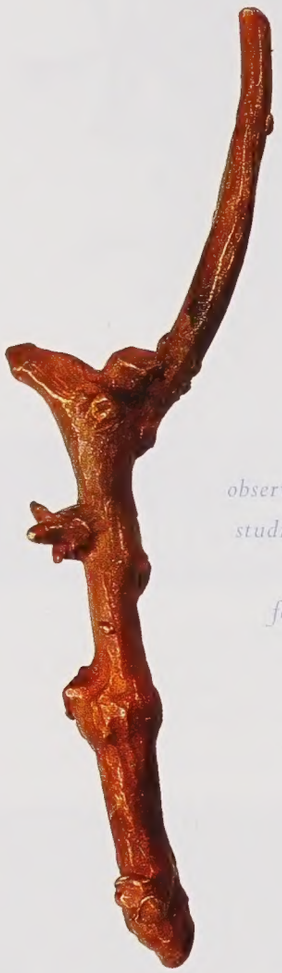

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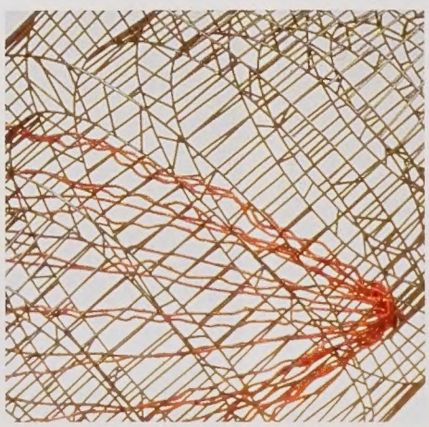
Vivienne Jones
Faith re-born...or, can you see the future?, 2000
sterling silver, copper, gold, pearl, found acrylic baby
4 1/2"
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

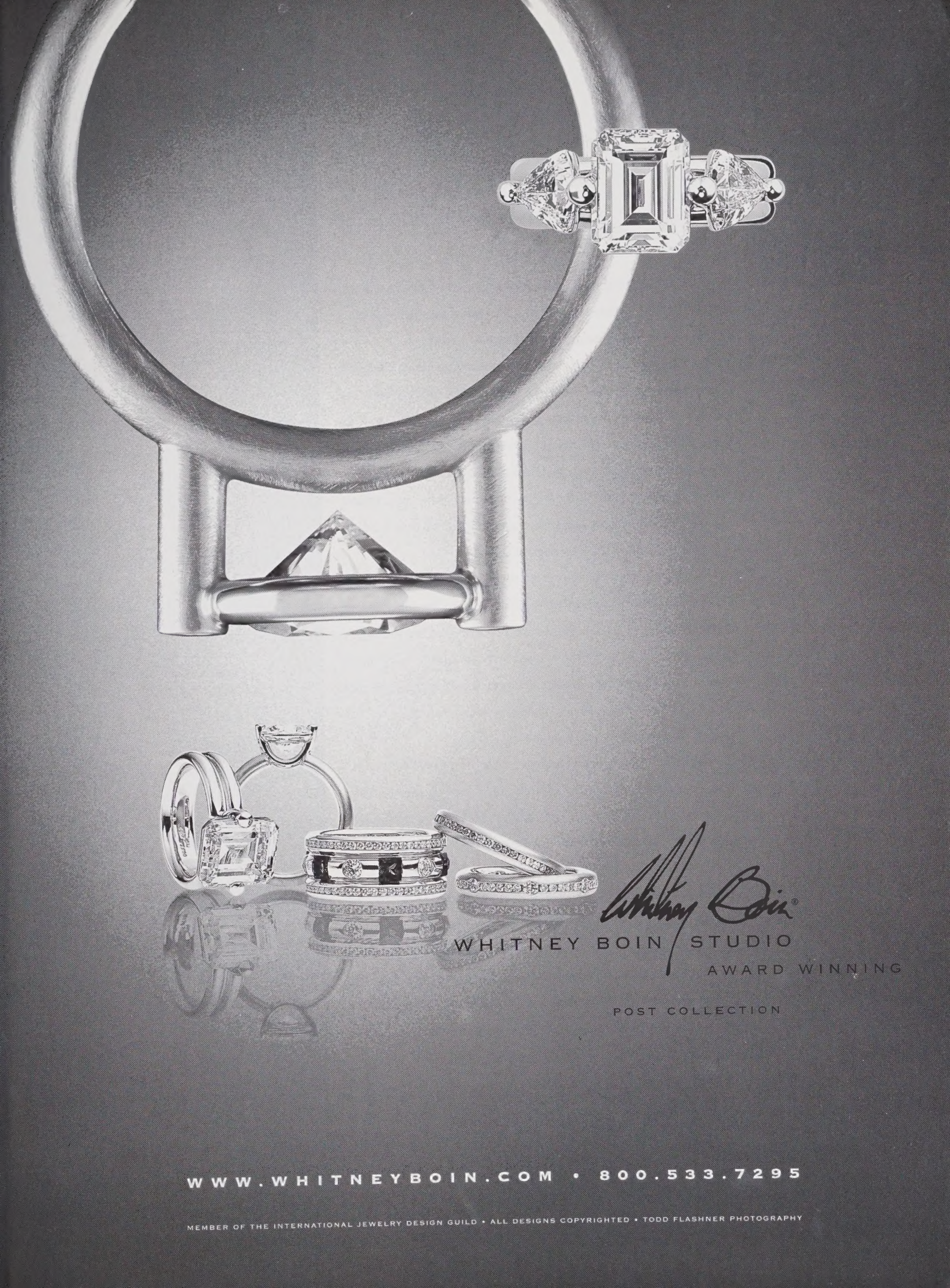
clockwise from above
Vivienne Jones
Bronze Twig, 2000
bronze
height 3 1/2"

Heidi Schwegler
Mouth Speculum II, 1998
silver, bronze, lens
8 1/2 x 4"

Lilly Fitzgerald
Brooch, 1996
quartz, 22k yellow gold
2 1/8 x 1 1/4"
Photo: Jonathan Kannair

Carol Kumata
The Possibilities of Order
welded steel
32 x 50 x 72"





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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

As this is our spring issue, it seems fitting to reflect on the season's associations and promise of renewed life. More than just a season, spring is also a state of being, full of expectation and hope.

There are many signs of spring in this issue of *Metalsmith*. The work of Vivienne Jones, featured here, is a celebration of nature's forms and processes. Inspired by natural specimens, Jones creates stafflike broaches that connote growth and movement; a cast fruit pit sprouts antlers, and a silver stalk springs a hoof-shaped pearl. Jones's *Faith reborn ... or, can you see the future?*, on our cover, is her most fervent expression of hope. With a baby perched on a small scepter, it evokes innocence, optimism, and new beginnings.

The vitality of the natural world is also given expression in the work of Lilly Fitzgerald, who selects her materials based on their innate sense of life. As in her series of broaches and pendants that frame butterfly wings, she seeks to showcase nature's brilliant regalia. Darcy Miro's work, in our Observations section, also pays tribute to natural forces, with the surfaces of her jewelry mimicking in miniature the effects of erosion, decomposition, and eruption.

The poet T.S. Eliot famously lamented, "April is the cruelest month," as he bemoaned the arousal of spring and its intimations of life: "breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing memory and desire, stirring dull roots with spring rain." A similar benevolent cruelty can be found in the jewelry discussed by Tacey Rosolowski in her article on the virtues of unwearability. These works confront us with the fact that we are alive, forcing us to be more conscious of our bodies in the world. Like any reawakening, it can be uncomfortable, but such discomfort can also be a blessing if it leads to greater knowledge or vigor. An unsettling awareness is indeed one of the virtues of challenging jewelry, as it is of most good art, and even of springtime . . .

SR

METALSMITH

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Editor Suzanne Ramljak
Graphic Design Catherine Jacobi, Ted Studios, Inc.
Copy Editor Michael Goodman
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SNAG/Metalsmith Business Office
710 East Ogden Avenue, Suite 600
Naperville, Illinois 60563-8603
(630) 579-3272, FAX (630) 369-2488
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Executive Director
Dana Singer
2275 Amigo Drive
Missoula, Montana 59808
(406) 728 -5248 FAX (406) 728-2729
DSinger@SNAGmetalsmith.org

Advertising
Jean Azzato
16 Dunbar Court
Bedminster, New Jersey 07921
(908) 901-9767 FAX (908) 901-0770
metalsmithads@aol.com

Editorial Materials
Suzanne Ramljak
22 Rockwell Road
Bethel, Connecticut 06801
(203) 792-5599 FAX (203) 792-5588
metalsmitheditor@aol.com

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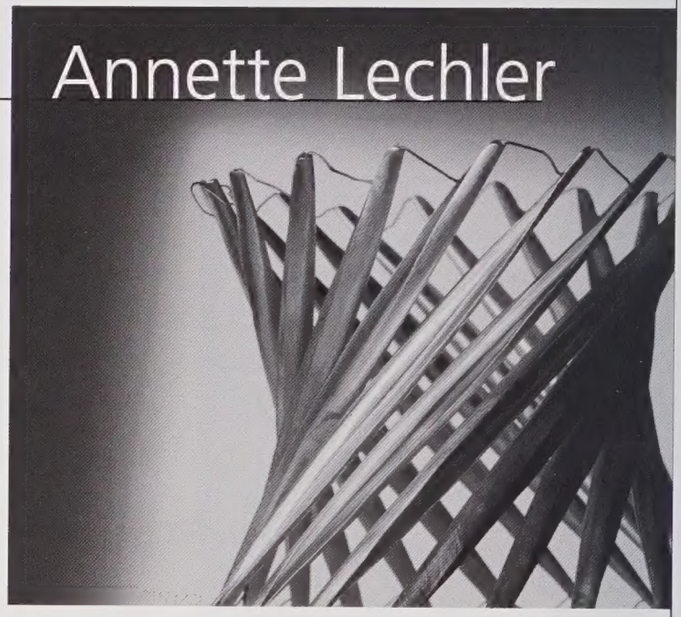

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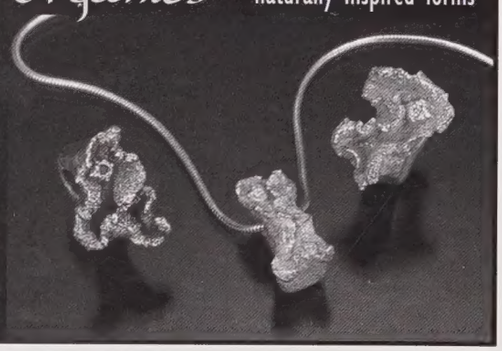

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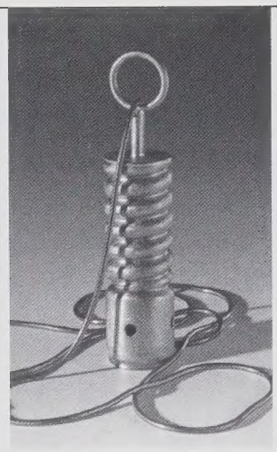

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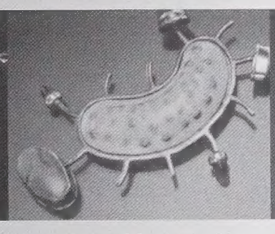

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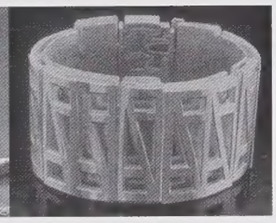

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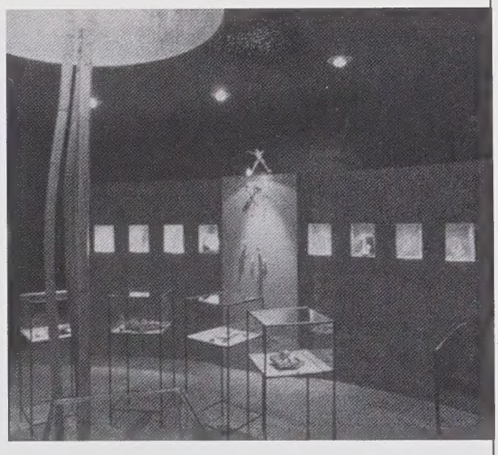

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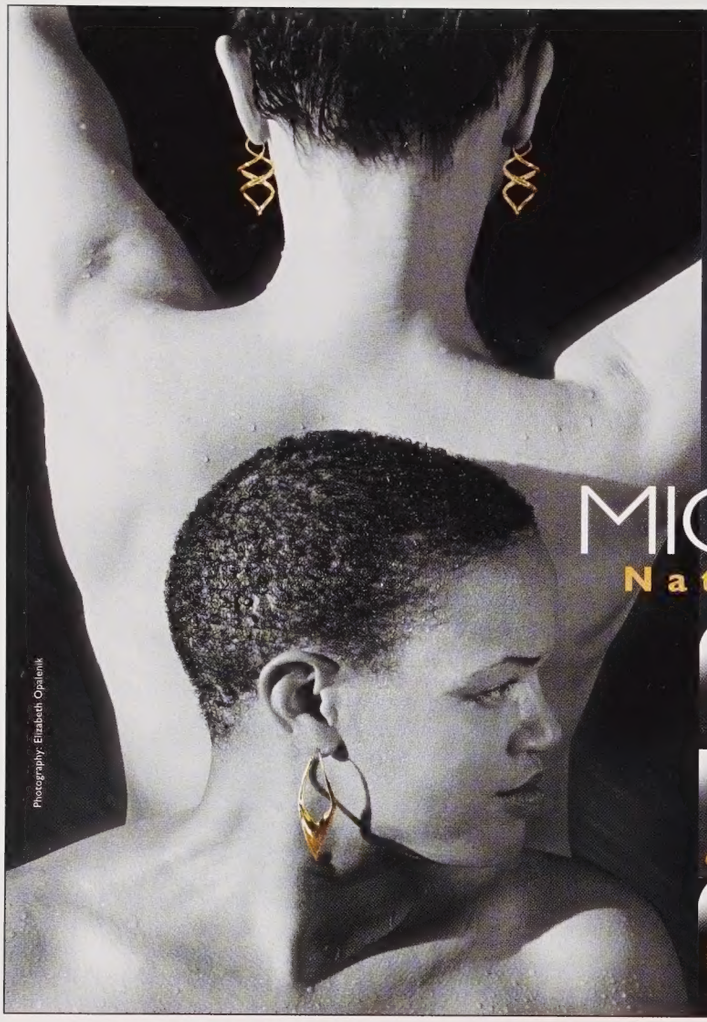

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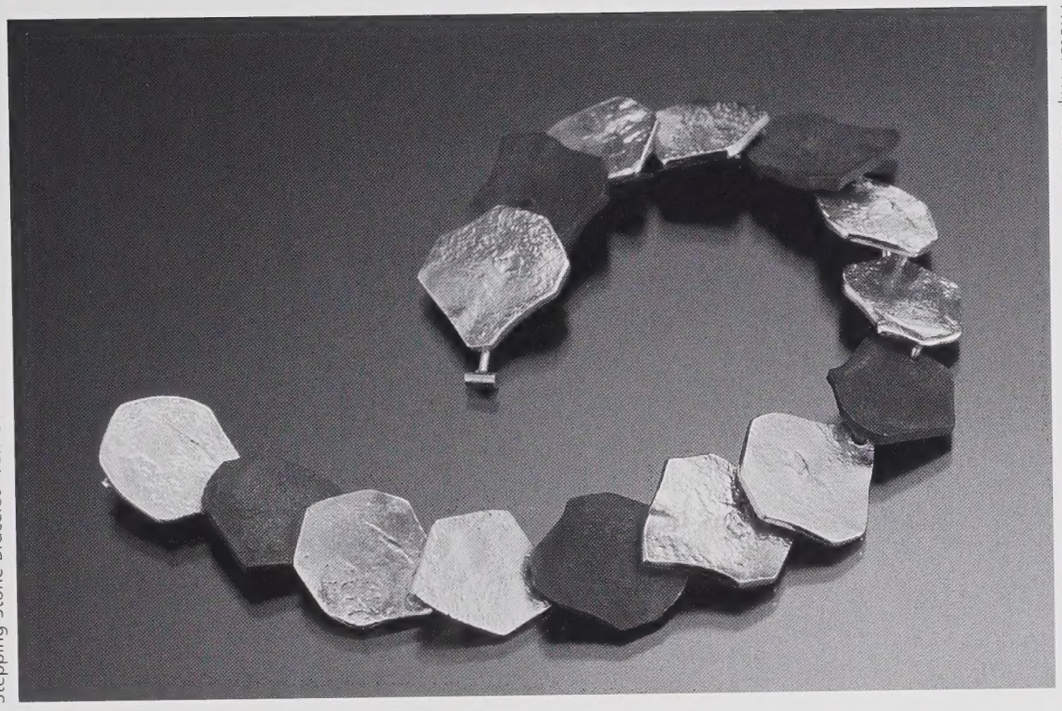

Stepping Stone Bracelet 18k Gold and Blackened Steel

Photo: Hap Sakwa

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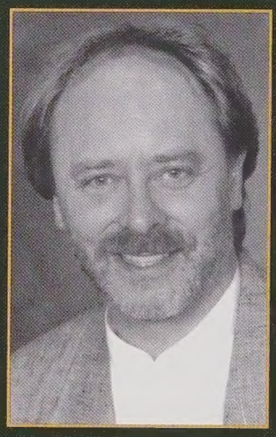

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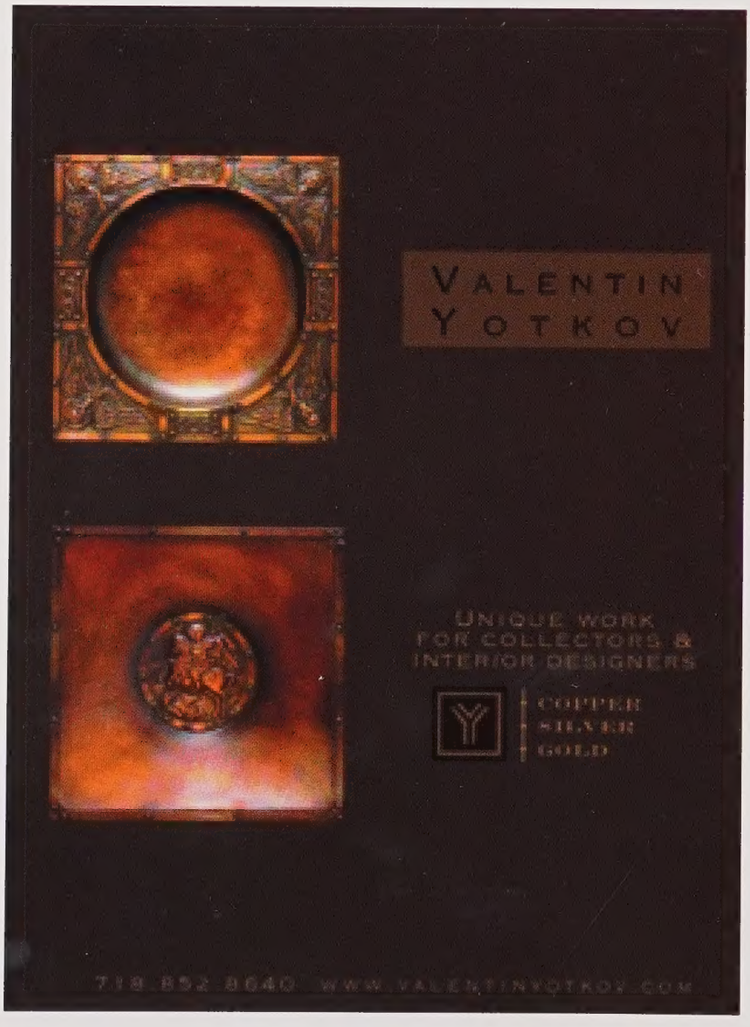

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Robert L. Crecelius, metal vessel.
Photo/Jerry Anthony

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"Multiple Views: Art Jewelry and Sculptural Objects – Innovative Forms, Techniques and Materials."

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For reservations please call the hotel directly. Mention that the room block is under Society of North American Goldsmiths. The cutoff for the SNAG room block is May 9 to be guaranteed room/rate availability.

Registration

SNAG members – $225, non-members – $290, student members – $125, student non-members – $175 student members no banquet – $85

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OBSERVATIONS

The Work of Darcy Miro

by Kate Hensler Fogarty

Cuff, 1999
sterling silver, diamond
$2\frac{3}{8} \times 2\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{5}{8}$"

Artist Darcy Miro takes the term "precious jewelry" and turns it on its head. Her careworn cuffs, rings, and neckpieces, most constructed of sterling silver or 18-karat gold, are more wearable sculpture than status symbol; they seem almost embarrassed to be valuable. An occasional shy diamond, garnet, or sapphire peeks from beneath a tendril or under a fold.

These "precious" pieces are not coddled into being. Miro pierces, pulls, and otherwise batters her wax casts to reflect forces of nature few jewelry designers choose to explore: erosion, decomposition, eruption. Once the piece is cast, Miro works the metal itself, leaving it grainy as an anthill or smooth as a pebble—or a little of both. The resulting work is like a fragment of a coral reef, shell, or rusted metal found washed up on the sand. The owner herself becomes the final link in the creative process, as the piece bends and changes color with wear.

Each Miro piece seems both thoroughly modern and at the same time an archaeological find. One recent large-scale sculpture commission, a paneled, rough-hewn bronze hearth, dares to remind its streamlined surroundings of the forests and ore from whence they came. With every jagged surface, with every hidden jewel, Miro questions the concept of material pleasure. Her art seems an ironic reminder that the joy found in it is fleeting; that the work itself will long outlast the wearer. ■

Kate Hensler Fogarty is a freelance writer based in New York.

clockwise from top left
Cuff, 2001
sterling silver
3 x 2 1/4 x 3/8"

Ring, 2001
18k gold
1 x 5/8 x 1/4"

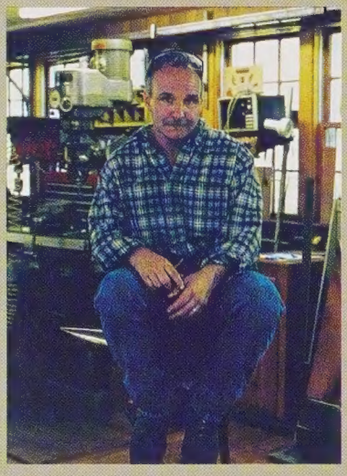
Cuff, 2001
18k gold
3 3/8 x 2 x 3/8"

Cuff, 2001
18k gold
3 x 2 1/4 x 1/4"

Neckpiece, 1999
sterling silver, diamond
7/8 x 5 x 3/8"

Charles Crowley and Claire Sanford

by Anne Larsen Hollerbach



above
View of Top Dog Studio.

Charles Crowley perched on his anvil.

Claire Sanford at her bench.

In 1995 Claire Sanford and Charles Crowley bought nineteen wooded acres with two worn buildings perched on a granite ledge above the Little River in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The place had been a rustic summer retreat for an order of nuns, and had slid first into disrepair and then into affordability. After a great deal of hard work, the original twenty-room dormitory is now a light-filled house, while the old red chapel contains Top Dog—Crowley and Sanford's thriving studio.

The chapel is a long, narrow building divided into three sections. On the day I visited, the largest room was uncharacteristically empty because Crowley had just delivered a set of stainless steel stair railings to a construction site. The clean wooden floor is flanked on both sides by Crowley's well-tended machine tools, including a hulking Bridgeport mill, whose 2,500 pounds must have come as a surprise to floor joists accustomed to a tiny congregation. The mill's presence on the inside of the narrow front door attests to Crowley's ingenuity and determination to adapt the environment to suit Top Dog's needs.

The main room's walls are mostly occupied by closed white cupboards and storage cabinets, punctuated here and there with bright snapshots of the family. Crowley's jeweler's bench stands against the back wall, its worktop empty except for his coffee, a Rolodex, and a calculator. His pliers hang off to one side, and all the other hand tools are laid away in the drawers. This is no longer the center of his work. Likewise, his hammers and stakes wait in shining ranks on the adjoining wall, but on this day they are eclipsed by a large copper pyramid that is part of a new chimney for the house.

Crowley's focus has shifted far from his long fascination with teapots and holloware toward architectural pieces such as doors, staircases, and railings. The reasons for this are largely economic, yet he is satisfied with this dramatic increase in scale and application. There are direct connections with his earlier work. The dusty pieces in a box of his old jewelry designs could now be maquettes of the sculptural details in his new constructions.

Since projects grow to fill the space available for their completion, Crowley now considers the old chapel completely inadequate to his needs and longs to expand. Local tax policies make it prohibitive for Top Dog to erect a new permanent structure, so Crowley hopes to hoist the old chapel straight upward and build a new story underneath it, with a concrete foundation and steel framing. This will provide the additional space he needs without enlarging the building's present footprint. Given the metamorphosis he has brought to the rest of the property, I have no doubt that this will happen, too.

Early in the renovation, Crowley constructed a fire-resistant second room to protect the vulnerable structure from torch and welding processes. With its fluorescent lights, gray tile floor, and black steel tables, this room

distorts the flavor of the place, as though one had stepped from nineteenth-century wood and sunlight into a twenty-first century subterranean bunker, a stark but necessary implant.

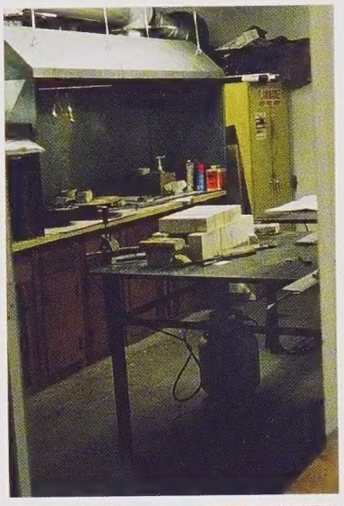
A narrow hallway beside the torch room leads to Sanford's studio, the third and smallest room. Sanford wanted a place with a door she could close, and three bright windows, each looking in a different direction, keep that precious privacy from becoming captivity. Although this space occupies only about a fifth of the building, it contains just as much energy in its narrower dimensions.

Sanford's work fits easily in one or two hands. She manipulates her materials directly with familiar, simple tools: saw, files, a small torch, a flexshaft. Her bench top is tidy but active with works in progress. Shelving covers one entire wall, and it is evident that she wants her supplies and books visually accessible. She has stashed her modest collection of hammers in a crate tucked under the lowest shelf. They are scruffy irregulars compared to Crowley's large and disciplined regiment.

The windowsills and frames host plumb bobs, seedpods, and little metal artifacts. On the wall behind her soldering bench, Sanford has mounted a few more pieces, but the most vibrant gathering of color and shapes is the large bulletin board beside her bench. Like her notebook pages, this board is a stimulating montage of images and suggestions: postcards of friends' work, photos of the kids, patina samples, cartoons, and simple but satisfying metal shapes that have since evolved into finished pieces and found homes with customers.

Sanford draws inspiration from the surfaces of things and the spaces between them; Crowley responds to fundamental structures. The meadow and woodland around Top Dog are thickly populated with huge boulders delivered to this high ground by retreating glaciers. These stones remind me of Crowley's strong and spare designs of objects intended to support, surround, lift, and protect. Likewise, the lichens that flourish on the sun-splashed granite are the exact colors of Sanford's favorite patinas, while her jewelry celebrates the areas of color and texture between defining lines. The work that flows out of Top Dog embodies an elegant binding of figure to ground. From the secure center they have made of this place, Crowley and Sanford can travel outward along distinctly individual paths toward a common goal. ■

Anne Larsen Hollerbach is a metalsmith residing in Franklin, Massachusetts.

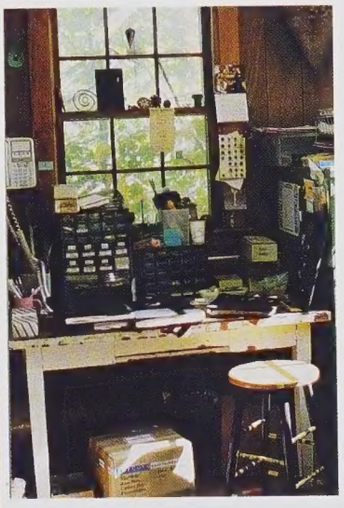


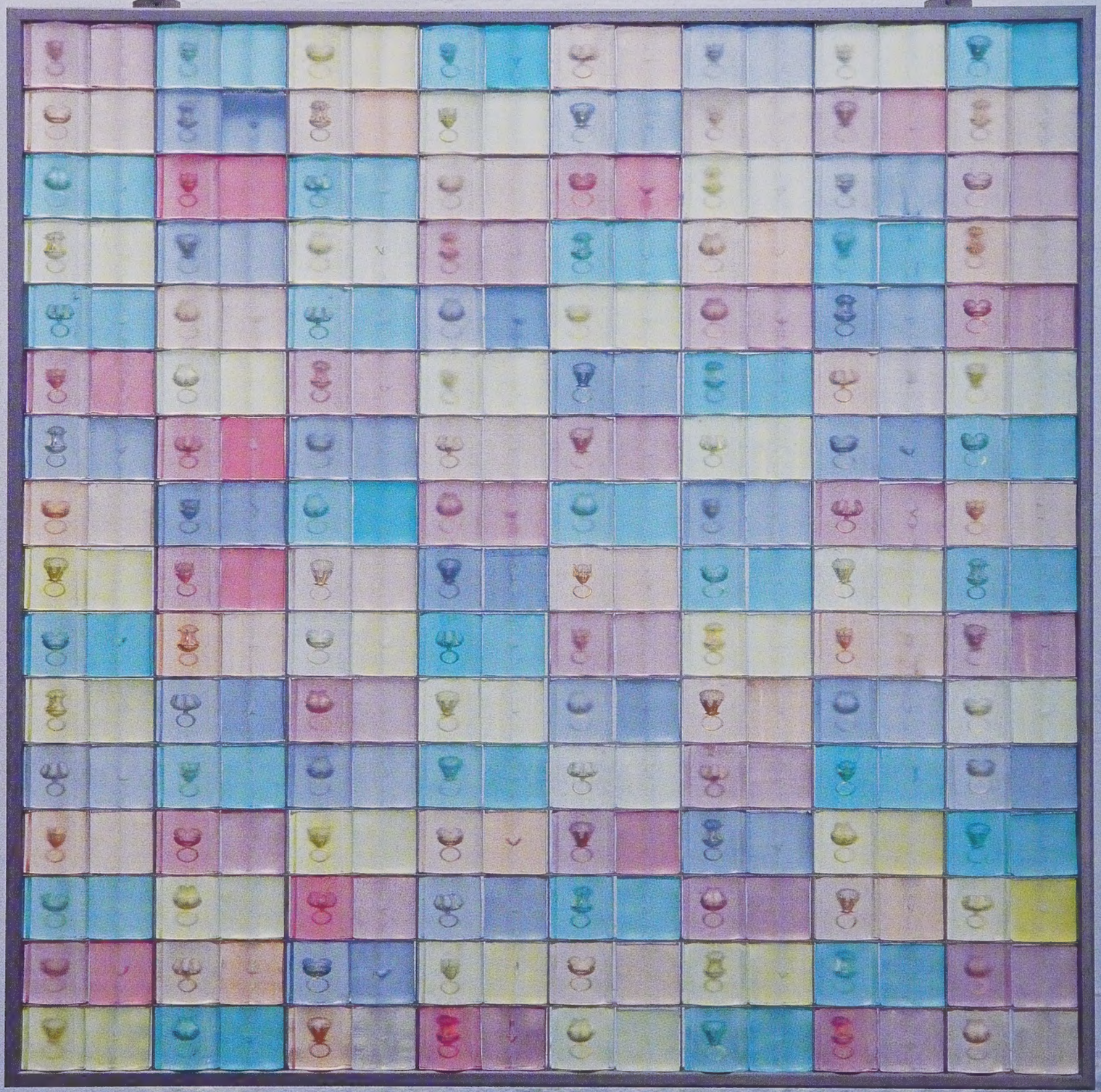
clockwise from top left
Staircase, 2001
Capital Resource Partners, Boston

Fire-resistant room where Crowley does welding and torch work.

A window in Sanford's studio.

Elements of a collaboration between Crowley, Sanford and Dale Broholm. Sanford designed the vessel forms and patinated them, while Crowley machined the forms and incorporated them into a staircase he created with Broholm.



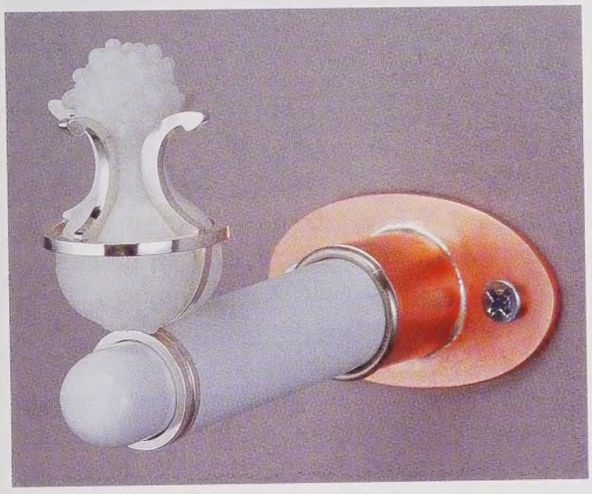


Heidi Schwegler
Legacy, 2001
urethane, sterling silver, silicone
6 x 6' x 3"
Photo: Bill Bachhuber

The Virtues of Unwearability

by Tacey Rosolowski

Otto Künzli began his neckpiece *Chain* by running a series of newspaper ads that provided a phone number and the statement "I collect wedding rings."[1] Many people responded.



Heidi Schwegler
Diseased Heirlooms, 2000
silver, silicone, copper
2 x 1 x 5"
Photo: Bill Bachhuber

A Greek couple sent a ring and a blue bead—protection from the evil eye when he cut the band. A ring taken from a soldier killed during the battle of Stalingrad was returned to his family by a comrade. A woman donated the ring given to her by her first husband, commenting, "He was a brutal dog." *Chain* is composed of forty-eight wedding bands of varying sizes and shades of gold, dating from 1891 to 1981, each with its own story. When the piece was displayed in Künzli's 1991 solo exhibition in Glasgow, curator Virginia Rigney asked, "Despite its formal beauty who could bear the weight of these individual histories by placing it around their neck?"[2]

The question of whether an object must be wearable in order to be classified as jewelry continues to stimulate controversy. Though discussions generally focus on bodily issues of comfort and movement, Rigney's suggestion that *Chain* is unwearable serves as an important reminder: we do not always recognize the loaded and complicated resonances of the term. A supple 85 centimeters in length, *Chain* presents no physical challenges. Its "burden" is formed by a combined emotional and historical weight. Dematerializing unwearability in this way, *Chain* provocatively suggests that the most useful question is not What physical features must a piece possess in order to be considered jewelry? The more revealing question is, How do we come to define a piece as "unwearable," and what do its challenges tell us about the status of jewelry and its culturally informed relationship to our bodies?

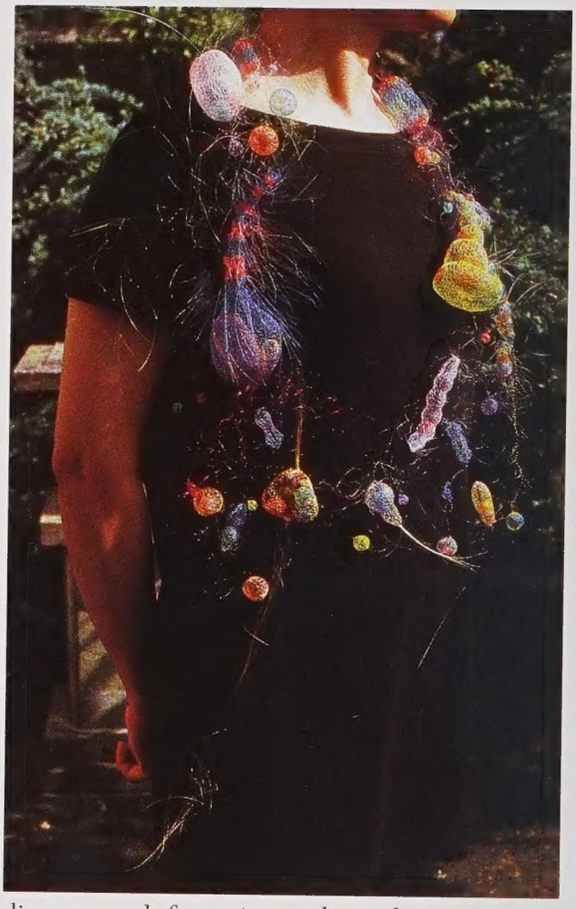
By focusing on this second question, I am suggesting that contemporary jewelry occupies an "expanded field," to use a concept historian Rosalind Krauss develops to describe modernist and postmodernist sculpture. Krauss notes that we all know that sculpture is "a commemorative representation. It sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolic tongue about the meaning or use of that place."[3] Modernist and postmodernist sculpture, in contrast, eschew site-specificity, "producing the monument as abstraction ... as pure marker ..., functionally placeless and largely self-referential."[4] Krauss demonstrates that the oddities called sculpture since the 1960s have a logic: they respond to a conventional, historically specific notion of sculpture, transgressing its parameters to play meaningfully with notions of place, the relationship of form to landscape and architecture, and the social activity of place marking.

Space does not permit a full description of Krauss's argument, but analogies with jewelry are evident even in this summary (a logical connection, since jewelers have occupied the same cultural environment that catalyzed sculptors' exploratory moves and many, for reasons beyond mere art envy, claim to work sculpturally). We know that jewelry *is* meaningful ornament situated at specific body sites, where it occupies the space between the surfaces of the skin and clothing (though it is not clothing or cosmetics and does not penetrate the skin's boundary).[5] Within this space jewelry's shape

and size are controlled by two linked factors: first, culturally determined notions of comfort and the body's need to function free of burden or irritation; and second, the body's normative silhouette, determined by medical notions of body conformation, the fashion system, and other media-generated ideals.

I word the definition in this way to point out that our understanding of jewelry, like sculpture, is conventional. This also means it is flexible, and the notion of wearability (and the related terms, "functionality" and "comfort") is a key indicator of its fluidity. One person's comfort can be another's agony. Even more important, the very notion of the wearable is culturally constructed. Examples from Western and non-Western contexts abound; however, Nora Fok's work is particularly instructive, since her knitted or woven monofilament fantasies play with the *appearance* of unwearability.

The pieces' dimensions and unusual forms (outsize rings, earrings with connecting loops that dip under the chin, neckpieces suspended from the earlobes by monofilament) signal physical unwearability. Yet, as Nora Fok points out, "They are very light in weight and warm to the touch, one hardly notices them."[6] They bounce back if crushed against a surface and interfere with movement less than their appearance would suggest. The designation of unwearability emerges because Fok plays with site-specificity and distorts the body's normative silhouette—two points where jewelry's field can be expanded.



right
Nora Fok
The Food Chain, 1999
knitted pigmented nylon

below
Nora Fok
Challenge, 2001
woven pigmented nylon

Fok's work underscores that even a seemingly physically based notion such as comfort—what the body can endure—is shaped by culture, one reason Virginia Rigney can so easily coin a metaphor of physical burden to describe *Chain*. The wearer is conscious of the piece's archaeological layers of meaning and, perhaps, a perceived obligation to *explain* the meaning-laden ornament. I have heard many jewelers classify their objects as unwearable when they are not up to meeting such a social obligation. Such comments frame unwearability as a problem of how an ornament fits into a culturally informed arena of social intercourse.

These varieties of unwearability have value because they lead us to examine the cultural assumptions underlying jewelry's conventional definition. Without a doubt, when jewelry exceeds the traditional parameters of wearability, it seems (like sculpture) to become disconnected from its traditional site. Wendy Ramshaw's innovations with display mounts expanded jewelry's field by inaugurating a life for rings independent of the body. Other artists exploit this loosening of site-specificity, producing very extreme forms that seem to become self-referential—a fact Peter Dormer and Ralph Turner express in their comment on large body ornament that can be worn only briefly: "Some work is decorative art, but that does not make it jewelry. It is abstract work with roots in jewelry."[7]

Rather than shoring up the traditional boundaries to circumscribe jewelry's proper field (and relegate certain objects to its margins), the expanded field suggests an inclusive approach through which seemingly marginal objects can help us reflect on how all jewelry functions. We shall also see that they do not spin off into abstraction as they expand jewelry's field but engage with the most materially experiential elements of jewelry's nature and appeal. Since the expanded field of contemporary jewelry is vast, I will focus on two artists whose work plays with unwearability in focused, but suggestive ways. Tina Rath works with ornament as social spectacle and embodied experience. Heidi Schwegler draws our attention to the cultural forces that determine physical normalcy. Fundamentally, both artists are concerned with how ornament relates to power and performance. I'll begin with Tina Rath and her homage to Queen Elizabeth I, *For Elizabeth*.

Rath's modern version of the ruff essential to

Elizabethan aristocratic dress reminds us that wearability and comfort shift even within one cultural tradition. The piece extends today's ideal, sleek silhouette and blurs the boundary between clothing and jewelry. However, Rath's homage suggests her larger purpose in linking the present to history: "Our celebrities are our monarchs—our sports stars and movie stars ... our music stars, because we are all involved in their performance."[8]

Extreme adornment has always fueled the performance of social status and power. Queen Elizabeth I used ornamental excess as one tool to battle doubts that a monarch might occupy a woman's body. *For Elizabeth* also stages a sartorial aggression to create social shock waves. It sets the wearer as the visual center of the group, stating, "You *will* look at me, because I *will not* give you what you expect to see." Indeed, Rath asserts that "to wear something that is deemed 'unwearable' by conventional standards takes a certain vision and a particular kind of gutsiness.... All of this together can give the wearer power."

Rath, however, is not purely interested in image and visual impression. Instead her "unwearable" forms expand jewelry's field in order to explore what's behind jewelry's capacity to create public spectacle. Rath theorizes that ornament is "the application of something to the outside that makes you feel different on the inside [and] that changes the way you carry yourself in the world." Ornament is the medium to create and channel such changes outward as a form of power. We have no formal English concept for this power; however, art historian Jean-François Billeter coins a relevant term—the "body proper."

The body proper designates "a relationship to our own body, whose presence we feel directly, and whose energy we can project onto the world."[9] Billeter devises this concept to explain the performative dimensions of Chinese calligraphic writing. The calligrapher's body, emotions, intellect, and spirit come together in this act, he explains—creative forces working in concert and emerging in brushstrokes that record the vital power behind the figure's creation. This union of forces—the body proper—is not a "thing" contained within flesh, but an outwardly directed performance.

Though this conception is alien to the Western mentality, which divides mind rigorously from body, the body proper nonetheless emerges in Western contexts. Innumerable craftspeople describe their acts of making and the sensually aesthetic power of their objects in similar terms.[10] We also witness the body proper in children and dancers, as Billeter points out, and feel its effects when a charismatic personality feeds a crowd's energy—a fact Rath notes in her references to athletes, rock and rollers, and celebrities. Anyone, however, might experience the body proper: ornament catalyzes a heightened embodied sensibility that transforms into what Rath describes as "an energy that precedes you. If you're aware of it, you can make things happen before you get there." For Billeter, this describes a person who projects her/his body proper.

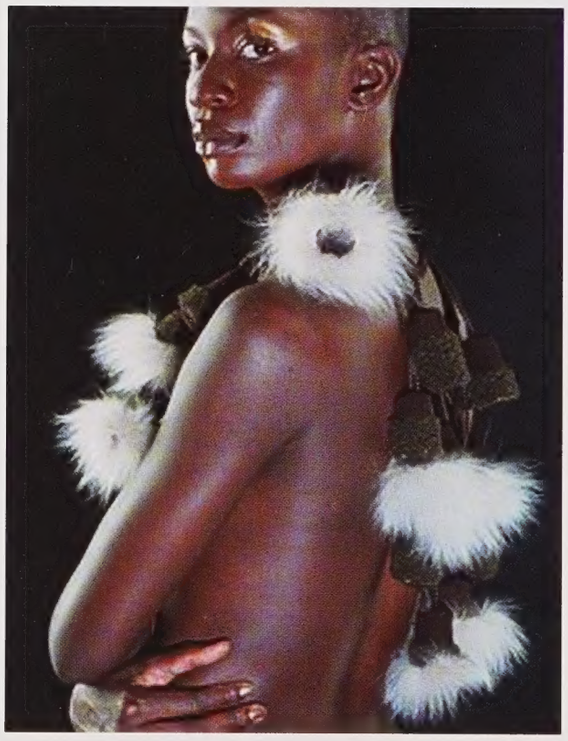
Obviously, small and even hidden ornaments can stimulate a wearer's expressive confidence and pleasure in occupying the flesh. However, the conventional parameters of jewelry contain this as *private* experience, a cultural regulation working in service of the notion that jewelry, though a focal accessory, should sit in the background of social interactions. Hovering dangerously near Muzak, ornament is part of "white space," a pleasant backdrop to a social life driven by concerns deeper than "mere" appearance. Rath expands jewelry's field from these points of restriction, however, by making ornament itself into a public spectacle. There's a refreshing honesty to this blatant admission that we are deeply fascinated with visual cues. Again, however, she looks beyond visual veneer—ornament is a focal point for witnessing the act of appearing and projecting power from the embodied source. To fully understand what she is getting at, we must listen to her key observation: "That power is felt by others and can be frightening."

Tina Rath
For Elizabeth, 1999
$11\,3/4 \times 11\,3/4 \times 1/8$"
sterling silver
Photo: Lenny Gonzalez

The powerful female body is still an unnerving cultural category, and feminine exhibitionism traditionally has one result—erotic objectification, which, as feminist scholars point out, is a self-protective response of a masculine gaze. If a strong woman is

emasculating, then turning *her* into a mere sexy object removes the threat. Feminists have long debated how to best address this cultural reality. One compelling argument holds that if women consciously adorn themselves as hyperfeminine icons, they take control of the erotic signals they send and can, therefore, operate independently of the masculine gaze.[11] Rath's work employs this strategy. Beyond mere feminist statement, however, her work is a cultural indicator: times and women's bodies themselves are changing.

Culture critic Colette Dowling argues that when women experience their bodies as weak and vulnerable, their psychic and social powers shrink accordingly. Many generations of women have been educated in the "frailty myth," as Dowling refers to it, and the imperatives persist. However, thanks to sports many young women have an unprecedented physical confidence. Neither frail nor shrinking, these women work from their embodied centers and channel their powers into other forms of social agency. Rath belongs to this younger generation (she is a



Tina Rath
White Fox Hanging Necklace, 2001
108 1/4" overall length;
2 1/4–3 1/8" pendant length
lamb, fox, leather, cord; machine and hand stitched
Photo: Mike Harris

devotee of *capoeira*, a Brazilian game "that blends martial arts, dance, music and spirituality"[12]). When Rath's ornaments expand jewelry's field, they also mark a cultural moment when this new form of embodied feminine consciousness projects outward. Any social change is frightening to some: still new on the cultural scene, this ornamental woman intervenes in social spaces, resisting the viewer's ability to interpret and objectify her. Free to take control of her manner of appearing and the messages she sends to a viewer, she uses her embodied sensibility—her body proper—to "make things happen before she gets there."

In *For Elizabeth* we witness the wearer dominating the visual space in the manner of a monarch, with the ornament both forming a zone of privacy around the wearer and impeding her contact with others ("hugging is impossible in this piece," Rath quips). However in what Rath describes as "an interesting paradigm shift" she also loosens the boundaries around the wearer and rethinks the body/power/ornament connection. In *Fragmented Lace*, for example, stiff, ruff-inspired structures fall in fragments over the shoulders to "represent the breaking of a personal need to maintain distance from others and symbolize a new receptivity."[13] Rath asserts that such ornament works with a power "more about inclusivity rather than exclusivity, which ultimately, in my mind, is a more effective way of orchestrating and utilizing power."[14] For her, this power is feminine rather than masculine, and its contours are evident in the serene atmosphere of the photographic composition, where adornment and domestic decor alike invite the viewer to enter an intimate space. The wearer of *Fragmented Lace* is the polar opposite of the inviolate *For Elizabeth*; however, she is no less spectacular or effective in transforming social interaction, since her mode is "based on conversation and the recognition that there is something bigger than yourself—not me, me, me." The issues at work become particularly clear in a piece such as *White Fox Hanging Necklace* from her fur series.

This long wrap with pendant fur elements not only blurs the jewelry/clothing boundary, but, as Rath observes, "it's skin on skin. There's something really wonderful about being able to caress yourself and wearing something that not only allows you to do that, but actually makes it impossible for you not to do that. It has to feel good on all sorts of levels." The erotic resonances of these pieces are real (so real they might constitute unwearability for some). Yet here the Greek term *eros* guides us to focus on more than mere sexiness, since part of the word's meaning is "to be in relation." These pieces create intimate forms of relation by exploiting the complexities of touch. Aristotle frames the central issue: "What is the organ of touch; is it or is it not the flesh ...? On the second view, flesh is 'the medium' of touch, *the real organ being situated inward*."[15]

Because tactile experience does not occur purely on the body's surface, ornament can bring a wearer to an intimate relation with the self's interior—physically and psychically. The notion of the body proper is relevant here: *White Fox* provides an occasion for pleasure in embodied existence, and it symbolizes that experience with a seductive visual vocabulary. The textures are varied and inviting, the forms sized to fit snugly in the hand. Inevitably, as Rath observes,

"somebody comes up to you and says, 'I really have to touch that.'" Such work serves as an invitation to participate communally in sensuality, a form of projection and power based on "inviting people into your space.... It invites collaboration without submission," an attitude reflected in the model's strong gaze and sensually powerful body.[16]

If Tina Rath is a glamour exhibitionist who activates the power of ornament in performative *eros*, Heidi Schwegler provokes our anxieties by being a "bad girl," in the sense Linda S. Kauffman defines in *Bad Girls and Sick Boys*. Schwegler violates taboos and "point[s] to a new paradigm of spectatorship, one that is generated from or driven by the insides of the body, in which the human body is simultaneously the spectacle, the performance space, the subject, and the object of pleasure and danger."[17] Schwegler expands jewelry's field by using ornament to frame the history of spectatorship that defines the body's physical normalcy.

Schwegler's work is rooted in a fascination with medical illustrations of the nineteenth century, when advances in microscope technology enabled researchers to develop parameters for distinguishing normal from pathological tissue structure. She says, "I remember abstract feelings of ... wanting to grab onto these illustrations and make them hand held, so they would be my objects."[18] She realizes this desire in rings and pendants from *The Pathological Record* series. Silicone forms set in silver refer to skin eruptions produced by atypical cellular reproduction. Paradoxically, as Schwegler notes, "something that has grown beyond a certain size shows us what is normal." Certainly we see jewelry's field expanding: rings grow beyond normal size, the bubbling surfaces are disturbingly resonant of something—perhaps the ornament itself—erupting from within the body. Making such objects and manipulating vision, Schwegler asserts, is "a power trip, you can prolong the gaze," and one of the things she wants us to see is that the line between the normal and pathological is flexible and arbitrary.

Schwegler's work underscores that medical images are not objective, but inherently aestheticizing—invisibly so, because we have been trained to see them as unadorned truth (an ironic cliché). Here she taps an important current in contemporary research: scholars have documented that medical illustration is strongly influenced by nonscientific visual conventions. Thomas Laqueur and Barbara Maria Stafford, for example, cite medical illustrations that invoke landscape painting and fashion.[19] Ann Starr analyzes images from a current physician's reference, the *Birth Defects Encyclopedia*, in which a close-up photograph of a weathered African-American man with a broad forehead and nose and full lips is captioned, "Notice the coarse features." Twin (Caucasian) sisters are "flat chested." These are ordinary-looking individuals, yet the text draws our attention to physical "defects" that signal no other pathology.[20] These are only a few examples of how scientific renderings of the normal and the pathological are historically inflected and can shift with technology, prejudice, and social agenda. Schwegler adds to the interrogation of medical gaze. For *The Pathological Record* series she juxtaposes fashion photos with medical images to point out that soigné fashion models and patients with skin pathologies are posed in disturbingly similar ways: the poses foreground bracelets, necklaces, skin lesions—as if there were no difference between them.

The eerie links between beauty and disease suggest that if pathology becomes ornament, then ornament is, perhaps, pathological. We can almost see Schwegler's erupting-tissue rings and pendants reshaping themselves as they move between these poles, like double images concealed in an Escher print. In general, as Schwegler points out, "when you look at clinical records, they're self-referential," designed to conceal the mechanisms leading to concept-production. Her work forces us to realize that these objects and images are the *results* of cultural activity. She expands jewelry's field with ornaments that focus on how looking *strategically* at the body—whether through science or craft—is an act of power, a cultural performance that shapes our visions of and reactions to our flesh. Schwegler makes the radical implication that the act of creating concepts about the body is a form of ornamentation—concepts do not emerge from a body-as-unadorned-truth, but are applied to it through processes that affect us all.

This is most obvious in *Mouth Speculum I* and *II*, designed as references to nineteenth-century gynecological specula. Schwegler created the elaborate forms to acknowledge that the older devices were ornamented and announced their invasive functions more obviously than their contemporary counterparts. Keying on functionality, the forms also indicate Schwegler's own "paradigm shift" (inspired by Kate Wagle), where she shifted her focus from replicating anatomical parts to "directly transforming the

Tina Rath
Fragmented Lace, 2001
15 3/4 x 15 3/4 x 1/8"
sterling silver

There's something really wonderful about being able to caress yourself and wearing something that not only allows you to do that, but actually makes it impossible for you not to do that.

body of the wearer." While Westerners are quite comfortable with certain kinds of body transformation (cosmetic surgery, for example), these ornaments are dramatic reminders of cultural differences in jewelry's site-specificity; unlike other cultures, the West has no tradition of mouth ornamentation. Schwegler's work links this prohibition to gendered notions of the body.

The activity (actual or imagined) of inserting these pieces (which must be done by someone besides the wearer) raises highly volatile issues. By imagining oneself as male or female, receiving or inserting the speculum, one occupies different positions in a power field (and one strikingly different from the model of "collaboration rather than submission" that Rath's fur work sets in place). The speculum is, perhaps, the quintessential hand-held object, designed to prolong the gaze and confer power on the observer. Schwegler chose to focus on the mouth

Jewelry may be precious, but its value increases as it changes hands and acquires history. So, too, a tissue culture has one order of scientific value when it is disembodied and clinically contained in glass or plastic and quite another when linked to an individual.

Heidi Schwegler
Mouth Speculum II, 1998
silver, bronze, lens
8 1/2 x 4"

because it is an erotic orifice that can be publicly displayed and is, therefore, an evocative focus for the body's penetration. The image of a hand extending *Mouth Speculum II* toward an open female mouth provokes the same anxieties women can experience during a vaginal examination, a cultural scene that dramatizes the ease with which a woman's body boundaries can be legitimately violated, her person reduced to an object of study, her experience defined through another's gaze. *Mouth Speculum I*, displayed on a male body, provokes a different anxiety, since a cornerstone of normative masculinity is the positioning of men as penetrators, not the recipients of violation either physical or psychic.

Such transgressive performance is a form of cultural study, so it is not surprising that Schwegler says, "I want to put these [ornaments and images] in a gallery space, which is much like a clinical space where you have an examination ... orchestrated as if it were part of a scientific study." In addition to examining the body, *we examine the process of examining the body*. This involves bringing the different stances that we take on the body into collision. We are forced to ask if this performance is a clinical space, a space of "different loving" (to refer to a book on alternative eroticisms), or pornography. We must contemplate whether the medical exam can be entirely free of erotic overtones, or eroticism free of a clinical fascination with anatomy.[21] And, indeed, if the clinic is a space where we make the body real by ornamenting it with concepts linked to agendas, what does it mean to become a willing voyeur in a gallery-as-clinic where we objectify art and craft? While we may prefer to keep these stances distinct, they inevitably contaminate one another—a fact as anxiety-provoking as the speculum performance itself, though it also draws attention to an important contemporary reality. Schwegler's work documents the cross-contamination rampant in our culture. We witness one arena of its influence every evening on TV, when the mask of objective newscasting slips and reveals alternative faces of infotainment, docudrama, and product promotion.[22] Schwegler also allows us to experience cross-contamination in the power of both science and craft to alter our imagination of the body. Which brings us to *Legacy*.

Legacy is an installation inspired, in part, by a visit to a morgue where Schwegler saw tissue samples preserved in colorful Tupperware containers. It is a large piece with more than 128 crafted sterling silver and silicone rings, each set in a urethane cube. From an economic standpoint, Schwegler admits, "I should have done [the rings] in white bronze, but I wanted to list 'sterling silver.' They're precious." This material allows her to exploit analogies between jewelry and tissue.

Jewelry may be precious, but its value increases as it changes hands and acquires history. So, too, a tissue culture has one order of scientific value when it is disembodied and clinically contained in glass or plastic and quite another when linked to an individual. *Legacy* brings these notions together. Reading horizontally across the installation, rings set in cubes alternate with urethane cubes containing

only a trace where a ring was impressed, then removed. The "empty" cubes refer to the skipped generations that nonetheless retain pathology in their genetic code. *Legacy* underscores how "from generation to generation we pass on heirlooms, which helps us understand ourselves, and also pass on genetic diseases. This is also part of our gift to future generations."

Legacy is the very image of the unwearable. Yet even though its rings are captured in exile from the body, they nonetheless "yearn for the body," as Tina Rath says, describing the emotive quality of all jewelry. *Legacy* expands jewelry's field yet returns us to the jewelryness of the objects it captures. Schwegler's piece invokes images of the "virtual space" of an extended family's jewelry boxes, each containing heirlooms destined for specific individuals, just as a grandfather's diabetes or an aunt's breast cancer will reappear in another generation. *Legacy* is a concrete document of objects and pathologies en route from one site to another.

At another level, the entire installation exists in a liminal state, caught between art and craft because it contains finely crafted objects. Schwegler reports, "I have to defend the notion of putting objects with high-quality craftsmanship in it. I can't imagine letting go of that part of the process ... it [the craftsmanship] gives these objects validity." Art critic Donald Kuspit would agree, stating that craft saves the "dignity... of the 'work' [object and labor] of art," since postmodernism has cut away its aesthetic and subjective dimensions.[23]

However much jewelry craft may participate in postmodernist interrogations of culture, it never loses its bond to the body, though it may expand the field in which we see the body's connections. Heidi Schwegler treats the body as a center of a network where a "connective tissue" of a very intimate nature feeds our conceptions of our physical selves. Tina Rath explores the body as a projective source, where ornament catalyzes an embodied confidence that can, potentially, transform that field in which the body moves as a sensual and agentic presence. Far from abstract, these jewelers' pieces engage with the physical very profoundly and in ways that raise our awareness of how conventional jewelry objects play with our bodies and their cultural status. Their ornaments foreground the mechanisms that allow jewelry to function as a cultural product, the elements of jewelryness that add nuance and meaning to our experience of the body's physical sites and our psychic and social experience. ■

Tacey Rosolowski is a writer who resides in Utica, New York.

1 This story, recounted by Virginia Rigney, assistant keeper of Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Glasgow, is quoted in Peter Dormer and Ralph Turner, *The New Jewelry: Trends and Traditions* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p. 183.

2 Ibid.

3 Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), p. 33.

4 Ibid. 35.

5 I will not discuss forms that hover between jewelry and cosmetics (stones or glittery pastes applied to the skin and referred to as "body jewelry") or piercing, the symbol of alternative, body-modification communities.

6 Nora Fok, e-mail to author, August 22, 2001.

7 Dormer and Turner, *The New Jewelry*, p. 148.

8 Unless noted, all quotations from the artist are taken from interviews conducted on October 27, 2000, March 3, 2001, and August 29, 2001.

9 Jean-François Billeter, *The Chinese Art of Writing* (New York: Skira/Rizzoli, 1990), p. 136.

10 Underscoring the inadequacy of Western language's ability to capture this phenomenon, ceramics artist and craft theorist Paul Mathieu uses the concept of the "heterotopia" (borrowed from Michel Foucault) to describe the cultural position of craft. He summarizes how analysis adopted from art criticism cannot account for the specificity of craft–as either a practice or a category of objects demanding a specific kind of engaged sensual interaction. He theorizes that craft's "heterotopia" is a space, or cultural position, outside and even disruptive of conventional categories that serve mainstream art criticism. See Paul Mathieu, 'The Space of Pottery: An Investigation into the Nature of Craft," in *Making and Metaphor: A Discussion of Meaning in Contemporary Craft*, ed. Gloria A. Hickey. (Hull, Qué.: Canadian Museum of Civilization with The Institute for Contemporary Canadian Craft, 1994), pp. 26–34.

11 Another camp argues that signs of glamour and sensuality signal co-optation into a patriarchal system; shunning them is a badge of correctness. Much American feminism has been stymied by the problem of beauty, tending to read the feminine figure as pure image, a surface, without considering the inner experiences that feed the power of the woman to intoxicate.

12 Tina Rath, e-mail to author, October 27, 2001.

13 Ibid. Rath's photographs of *Fragmented Lace* refer compositionally to conventions of such Dutch painters as Vermeer. In the process she responds to their well-documented explorations of the voyeuristic or intrusive male gaze, on which see Philip Leider, "Vermeer and Hopper," Art in America 89, no. 3 (March 2001): 96–103. Rath experiments with imagery that sets the feminine presence in control of the domestic space, with a gaze that meets the onlooker's and extends the arena of control and invitation into the space in front of the picture plane.

14 Tina Rath, e-mail to author, October 27, 2001.

15 Aristotle, from *De Anima*, cited in David Appelbaum, *The Interpenetrating Reality: Bringing the Body to Touch* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), p. 1.

16 It could be argued that the placement of such sensual work on a nude black female body invokes a history of exploitation that includes attributing to black women a (pathological) hypersexuality. One might also recognize a primitivist cast in the image, heightened by the fur ornament itself. Elsewhere I have analyzed how images function in very complicated ways, supporting multiple interpretations, particularly when they are set in a context (Tacey A. Rosolowski, "Woman as Ruin," *American Literary History 13*, no. 3 [2001]: 544–77). Such is the case with this image, juxtaposed with Rath's ornaments and other explorations of photographic representations. Rath states, "I think she has an interesting combination of those beautiful doe eyes with her very visible arm muscles and closely cropped hair" and "... she is definitely female and emanates this kind of power that I am talking about, soft but strong" (e-mail, October 27, 2001).

17 Linda S. Kauffman, *Bad Girls and Sick Boys: Fantasies in Contemporary Art and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 15.

18 All quotations from the artist are taken from an interview conducted on September 16, 2001.

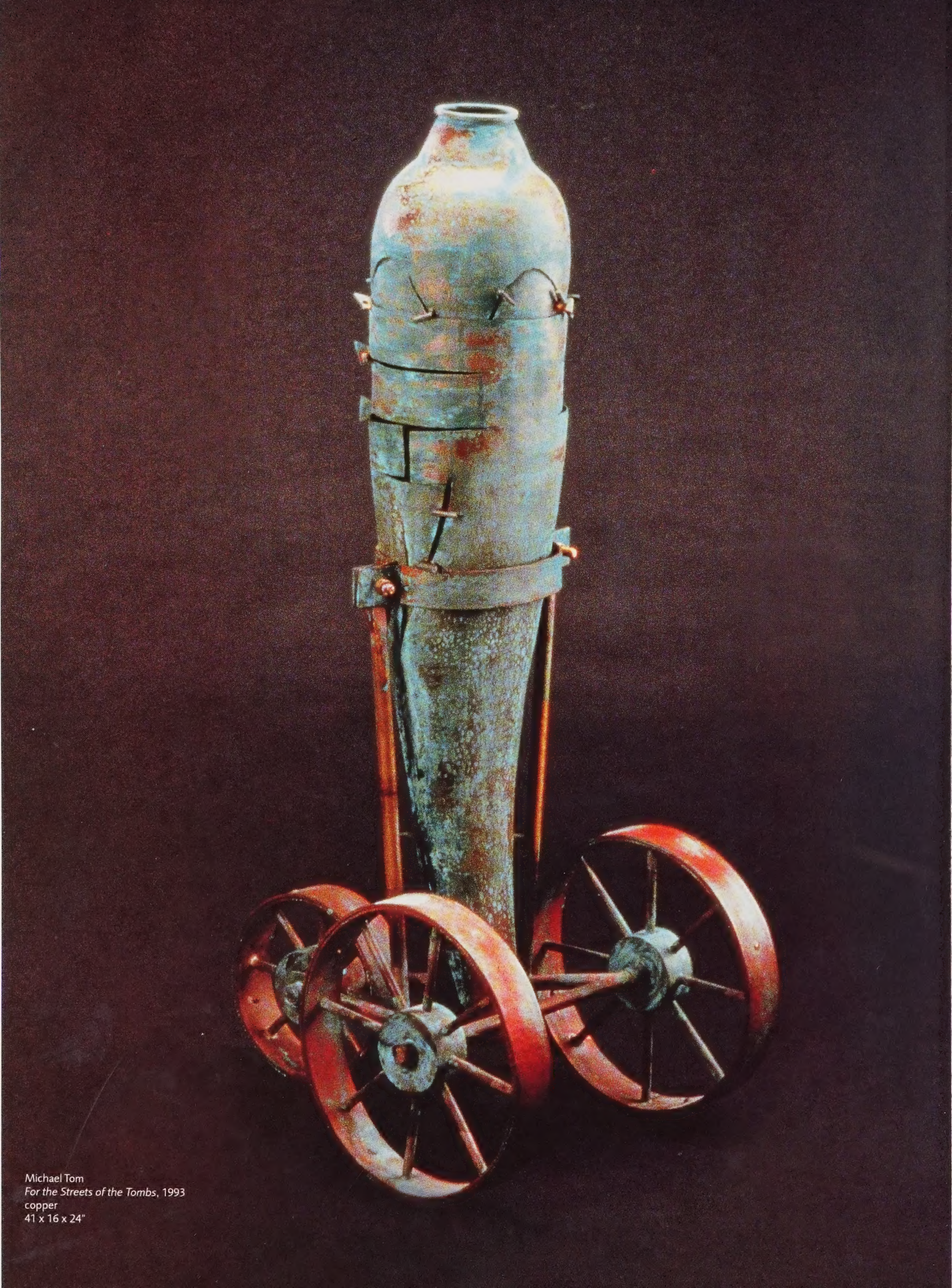
19 See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 166, commentary on figure 56, an illustration of the female reproductive tract; see also Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 78, an analysis of the rendering of the female spine and ribcage.

20 See Mary Louise Buyse, ed., *Birth Defects Encyclopedia* (Malden Mass: Blackwell Science, 1992), pp. 1158 and 1380, respectively. I thank Ann Starr for bringing this medical text to my attention.

21 Sex aid vendors answer this question: they sell clear plastic specula to lovers who wish to see inside one another. The objects are sculptural and often come with stands so they may be displayed as aesthetic objects.

22 For an analysis of this notion of realism in transgressive art forms, see Kauffman, chapter 6.

23 Donald B. Kuspit, "Craft in Art, Art as Craft," *New Art Examiner* (April 1996), pp. 14-19.



Michael Tom
For the Streets of the Tombs, 1993
copper
41 x 16 x 24"

This article is part of a unique collaboration between *Metalsmith* and *AJM*, the monthly magazine published by Manufacturing Jewelers and Suppliers of America. To provide a more rounded overview of aspects of Asian-influenced metals, we are publishing companion articles that together examine the related philosophical and technical issues. Here *Metalsmith* presents the work of several key artists whose works were influenced by Asian aesthetics and techniques, while the March issue of *AJM* explains the technical side of the Korean damascene process, as told by the artists who use it. The full text of the damascene article is available on the *AJM* website at www.ajm-magazine.com. For a copy of the March issue, please order through the *AJM* website or call 800-444-6572, ext. 3038.

Matter into Metaphor

Transformation in Asian and Western Metals

by Celia Rabinovitch

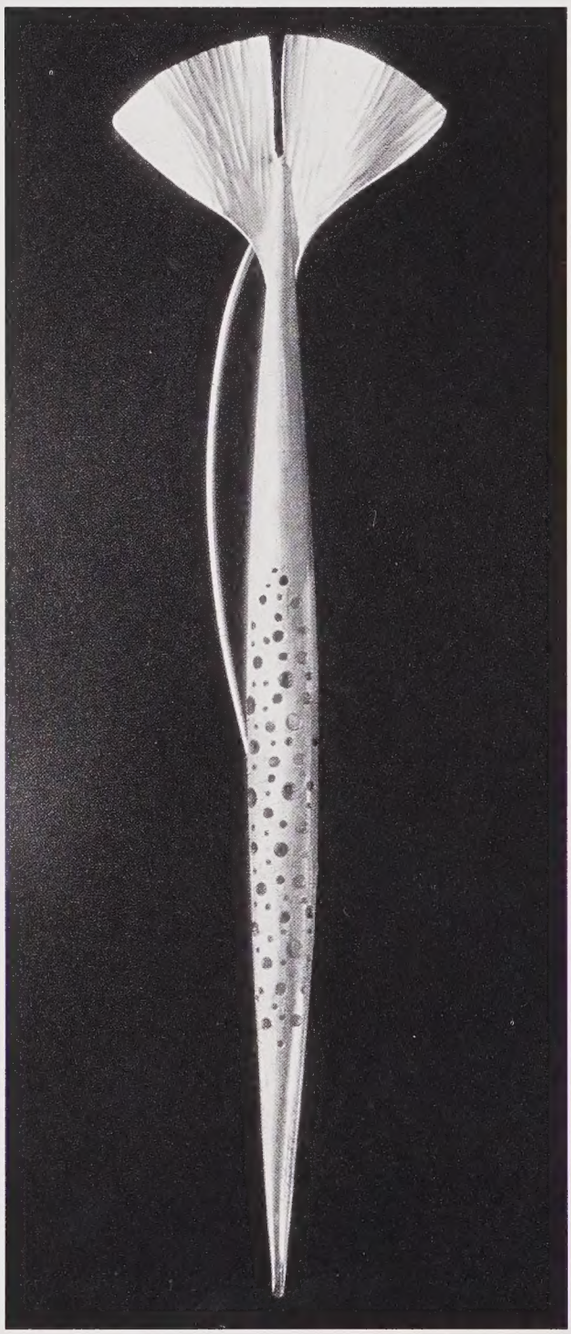
In archaic cultures the alchemist, the smithy, and the artist were all of one fabric; their powers of transformation over the material world were revered and even feared by the rest of society. The first alchemists employed metals to perform a physical transformation of matter that effected a metaphorical alteration in the witness. This process of transforming matter into essence or metaphor exists in all traditions of making — from the early herbalist's extraction of plant essences, to the grower's coaxing of earth into flowering and food-bearing plants, to the alchemist's wresting the gold or eternal essence that symbolized spiritual transformation and redemption from the raw material of lead — showing that we are physical creatures embodied in a material world, the properties of which remain secret and concealed until revealed to us by alchemical transformation.

Peggy Eng
Brooch, 2001
anodized and carved aluminum
6 x 1"

For the early smiths who originated alchemy, only through worldly matter could that other, more vital, essential element be discerned. The making of their art became the conduit between these two worlds of matter and meaning, enacting the transformation of metal into metaphor. Moreover, such alchemical knowledge was hermetic and, like Zen Buddhism, "a secret transmission of knowledge outside books and words" that becomes known only through practice and the guidance of a more experienced master.

The origins of metallurgy are shrouded in mystery, contributing to the mythology that developed around the metalsmith's art. With some variations this tradition existed in ancient China, Africa, and Europe but stemmed from roots so archaic as to arise from a basic principle: that of the forge and crucible as metaphors for the interpenetration of natural and sacred worlds. Of all the traditions of *homo faber*—man the maker—the smithy is the first in recorded history, developing from the Neolithic period of hunting and gathering as the creator of efficacious tools that extended the reach of the human being. Similarly, these forged objects or tools were often adorned with symbols that

called forth the hunted animal, increasing the efficacy of the hunt through the principle of sympathetic magic—that is, that the part suggests the whole. Mircea Eliade observes that, "One element nevertheless is constant—that is the sacredness of metal and consequently the ambivalent, eccentric and mysterious character of all mining and metallurgical operations."[1] In medieval Europe, the alchemist, the apothecary, and the artist belonged to the same guild, those who ground matter with mortar and pestle,



Dawn Nakanishi
Zephyr, 1997
sterling silver
4 x 1"

extracting the essence, color, or vital energy of the material itself. While in modern European history alchemy has been viewed as an early form of chemistry that worked empirically by trial and error, this was not necessarily the case. The intention of the alchemist was to perform an analogous process whereby the refinement of the metal embodied the spiritual transformation of the alchemist's soul. In ancient Nordic culture, the smithy was connected to the myth of extraordinary beings, the unpredictable, mischievous and treacherous dwarfs (the *Nibelung*), who forged with hammer and crucible in the underworld to bring elements of earth, matter, and fire into the world of form. In Africa the smithy referred to the crucible as his wife or the anvil as his bride, because the intertwining properties of male and female, heat and material are coalesced into a new form of the smith's making. In all of these archaic cultures the smith is known to accelerate, further, or emulate the processes of nature, creating new phenomena. Thus metallurgy and alchemy were initially connected, and only later did they develop into separate forms of knowledge. In Europe the magical properties of metals were congealed by the alchemist into the force of the philosopher's stone, which granted powers of vision into all aspects of the material world, whereas in Chinese alchemy, gold itself was used as an elixir that extended life and gave the alchemist the power to see into all things.

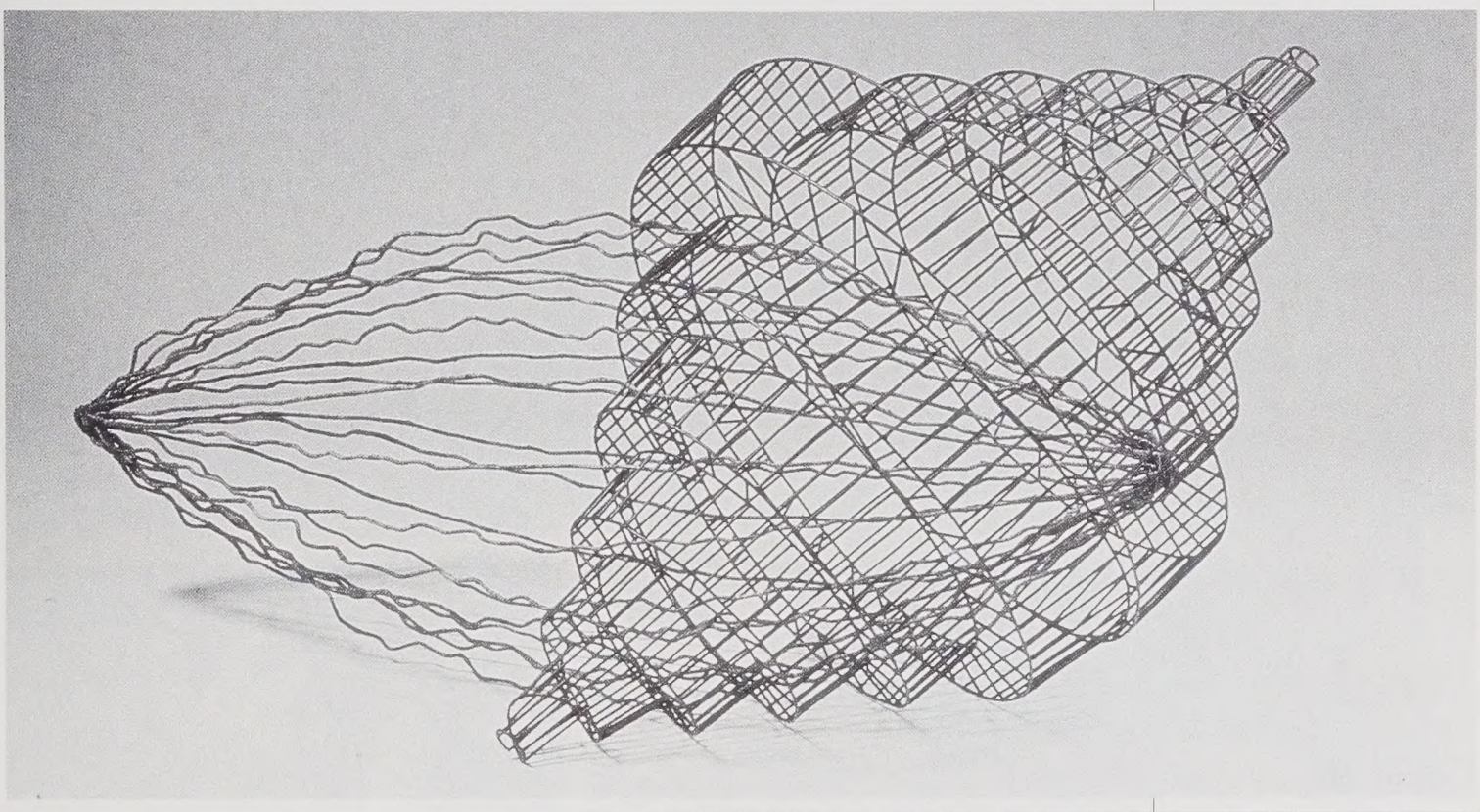
The 2001 exhibition "Asian Roots, Western Soil: Visual Poetry in Metal," curated by artist Dawn Nakanishi for Cabrillo College Art Gallery in Santa Cruz, brought together these themes of the artist as smithy, shaman, or alchemist in Asian and Western culture. This ambitious exhibition provides an ideal point of departure to explore how these artists use the principle of alchemical transformation of the first metalsmiths. The exhibition brought together work by eighteen Asian or Asian-American artists living in the United States. Some of the artists, including Christine Clark, Ron Ho, or Dawn Nakanishi, were born in the United States but feel an increasing pull toward their original culture; others, like Junko Nakazawa or Mariko Kusomoto, came from Japan or other Asian nations but now reside here. The artists' works included expressed individual sensibilities arising from Asian aesthetics recontextualized in contemporary North American culture. The exhibition presented works that embodied the individual Asian heritage of each artist, complemented by the artists' statements that described their relationship with their culture of origin. "Asian Roots, Western Soil" judiciously avoided imposing an ideal aesthetic or theory on the art, thereby recognizing the multiplicity of cultures in the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean sources from which the individual artists drew. But in fact a new aesthetic emerges from this diverse group of artists loosely connected through their experience of biculturalism or expatriate perspective. This aesthetic becomes more evident when seen against the backdrop of spiritual, aesthetic, and alchemical sources in Asia, Europe, and North America.

A similar aesthetic of cultural complementarity

was first manifested in the transmigrations and heritage of the ancient world, where even in 500 B.C. there is an "orientalizing" influence in archaic Greek art originating from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China. In ancient Rome there were substantial multicultural influences from North Africa (the cults of Isis, Astarte) and Asia Minor (the Goddess Cybele) evident in numerous archaeological examples. A significant history of East-West cross influences in art already exists, particularly between China and Europe, which since the eleventh century and the development of the spice trade have encountered each other in art, trade, and values.[2] The fascination has been mutual, its long history complicated by an informal exchange of ideas, art, and goods between cultures, which created a demand for specific items such as jewelry, curiosities, embroidered silks, porcelains, and enamels coveted by the European audience, and for the stylistic influence of certain Western art motifs, including deep space, illusion, and colored surfaces. In our current, rather ahistorical culture, these earlier developments are often overlooked in the deconstructive rush to theorize about the "other," leading to the myopic idea that multiculturalism may be an isolated new phenomena. "Asian Roots, Western Soil" framed a synthesis of contemporary North American culture and the millennia-old cultures of China, Japan, and Korea that resulted in a new aesthetic peculiar to our own times. This aesthetic was a phenomenon of the "hybrid artist," who from Asian roots is changed by the Western soil and influences that he or she absorbs. The exhibition elegantly demonstrated this hybridization as a unique process, substantively and stylistically, in each artist's work. Each was compelled by different experiences of dislocation and relocation or by the sense of regained cultural memory. For this reason the exhibition ventured into new territory both in the contemporary history of metal arts in America by developing a new perspective of hybridization, transcultural roots, and the cultural memories of Asian artists as they uncover sources long familiar to them.

The aesthetic traditions of China, Japan, and Korea have re-emerged in a new geographical, cultural, and historical context in North America. In Chinese culture, Taoism defined art, poetry, herbalism, medicine, and alchemy, as a way of knowledge that encouraged the interpenetration of the Tao with all things. The Taoist wanted to reveal this energized *chi*-presence, to make visible this invisible Tao, the mother of all things. The Chinese worldview produced a spiritual aesthetic centered on the balanced expression of quiescence and dynamic energy. In order to understand this religio-aesthetic tradition, one must compare the sacred texts of Taoism and Ch'an and Zen Buddhism with their parallel expression in art. Through its synthesis with Zen Buddhism in China from the sixth century A.D. (and in Japan from the eleventh century), art itself became a way to

Carol Kumata
The Possibilities of Order,
welded steel
32 x 50 x 72"



This aesthetic was a phenomenon of the "hybrid artist," who from Asian roots is changed by the Western soil and influences that he or she absorbs.

experience the Tao or the Buddha nature, because unlike the supernaturalism of Western Europe, Taoism never rejected the physical world; in fact, it embraced it. Early Chinese metallurgy and alchemy stemmed from Neo-Taoism's pursuit of the elixir of longevity in the hermetic truths of the Tao-te Ching; all physical transformative processes lead to this goal.[3] Marcel Granet has noted that "Taoism goes back to the days of the guilds of smiths, custodians of the most wondrous of the magic arts and the secrets of primal sources."[4] Taoism, the indigenous sacred tradition of ancient China, became synthesized with Ch'an and Zen Buddhism from the sixth century onwards. This synthesis produced a richly associative web of ideas, practices, and forms that provided the basis of the art of China and later Japan.

above
Richard Mafong
Button Down Shirt
sterling silver, brass, embossed foil

right
Susan Chin
Mia Divining Rods, 1997
mixed metals and semiprecious stone, shakudo, and mokume

From Taoism's emphasis on the fundamental emptiness and receptivity of the Tao, Ch'an and, later, Zen Buddhism began a philosophical and aesthetic dialogue around the interpenetration of form and formlessness. From the standpoint of meditation, the polarity of form and formless manifests itself in the ephemeral thoughts that preoccupy the fundamentally empty nature of mind. In the visual arts of China and Japan this had a concrete manifestation. This aesthetic of emptiness, combined with modernist simplification, is found in Carol Kumata's sculpture, *The Possibilities of Order*, which derives from natural forms such as pods and shells and plays with emptiness by enclosing space in linear wires. Similarly, Dawn Nankanishi's Zephyr brooch relies on an idea of formlessness—the elemental force of wind—and gives it physical embodiment in a form suggesting movement and growth. These works suggest the central Taoist idea of formlessness, encapsulated in this excerpt from chapter 14 of the *Tao-te Ching*:

> Revealed, it is not dazzling;
> Hidden, it is not dark.
> Infinite, it cannot be defined.
> It goes back to non-existence.
> It is called the form of the formless,
> And the image of non-existence.
> It is called mystery.
> Meet it, you cannot see its face;
> Follow it, you cannot see its back.[5]

Metaphysical empty space is one of the strongest motifs of both Chinese and Japanese art. Stemming from Zen Buddhism's ideal of

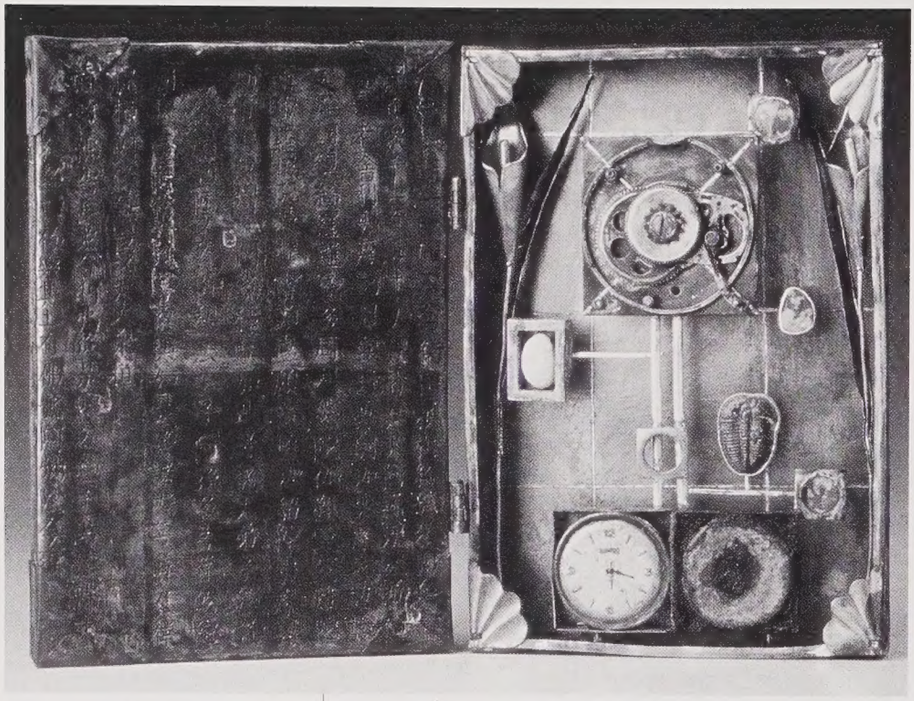
sunyata (emptiness) as the ultimate end of meditation, the aesthetic quality of an active emptiness in painting was called the *k'ung*, or "void," and informs the design of most Asian art.

The art of Michael G. B. Tom makes reference to specific themes from Confucianism and Buddhism. He writes that, "my art has incorporated two parallel themes—the embodiment of the vessel form and the spiritual nature of death. I have used the vessel in its broadest interpretation to include boats, the human body, and containers." Confucianism in China referred to the human being as a "vessel" that could be filled with the correct filial emotion. The large sculpture *For the Streets of the Tombs* uses layered references to the human form as a vessel, the funerary urn, and to archaic Chinese bronzes. Its symmetry and patina of age suggests the incised ritual bronze vessels of Shang and Chou dynasties. Contradicting the static, hieratic, and ritual impression of the vessel, it rests on elementary copper wheels, implying both movement throughout the "streets of the tombs" and the use of the vessel in sacrificial ritual and interment in the tomb. The elegant form of the vessel remains mute, and like archaic columns or hieratic human figures, expressive of finality and silence.

The metaphor of the boat as a symbol of transformation provides an important image in Buddhist culture, along with the perception of life as the formless and ever-changing movement of water. The important Buddhist Prajna-Paramita Sutra uses this metaphor to suggest that the Buddha way is itself a boat or vehicle for insight, which, once achieved, leaves its vehicle behind. The Sanskrit term Prajna-Paramita translates literally as "wisdom gone over to the other side," and many Buddhist parables support this concept. There is the popular story of the two monks who, hiring a ferry to take them over to the other shore, find themselves carrying the boat even after they have arrived at their destination. Hence the Zen retort to the scripture-reciting purist monks to "kill the Buddha," or the observation "you're still carrying that boat (or sutra, or woman) even when you've arrived." Along these lines, Peggy Eng's *Brooch* uses the image of the boat as a carrier of insight or good luck. The pearl of Eng's brooch embodies the precious quality of insight. In China, Japan, and Korea, the elemental image of the dragon (a reservoir of the *ch'i* of nature, water, wind, thunder, and rain) often contains a pearl or jewel in its mouth, or held by its chimerical legs. A symbol of wisdom, one must enter the dragon to achieve insight, thereby working with its elemental force. This myth is antithetical to the medieval tales of St. George, who slays the dragon to carry away the princess, Marguerite, whose name in French means "pearl." Pearls appear combined with gold in several works, including the *Mia Divining Rods* brooch by Susan Chin, of mixed metals and semiprecious stone, and the *Pendant* by Hiroku Pijanowski. The divining rod, an intuitive tool to uncover the secret movement of water in both East and West, expresses a feeling of hope and discovery in the balanced design by Susan Chin. Pijanowski's *Pendant* marries baroque, exquisitely wrought wings (a symbol of the transitory nature of life) with the eternal luminosity of the pearl.

The Ch'an or Zen Buddhist worldview synthesized the Taoist idea of *ch'i* energy with the Confucian filial piety and ancestor devotion. Zen arises from the insight/*satori* that the ordinary is extraordinary, an insight manifested in the aesthetic and artistic attitudes of China, Japan, and Korea. If even the most modest object can embody ephemeral beauty, described in the simplest possible terms in the haiku of Japan, then it too can become a vehicle for spiritual transformation. In modern art history the Surrealists arrived at the idea of the ordinary becoming extraordinary from a different path, that of non-rationality and poetic, psychological

Hiroko Sato Pijanowski
Pendant, 1996
18 k gold, emerald, pearl



If even the most modest object can embody ephemeral beauty, described in the simplest possible terms in the haiku of Japan, then it too can become a vehicle for spiritual transformation.

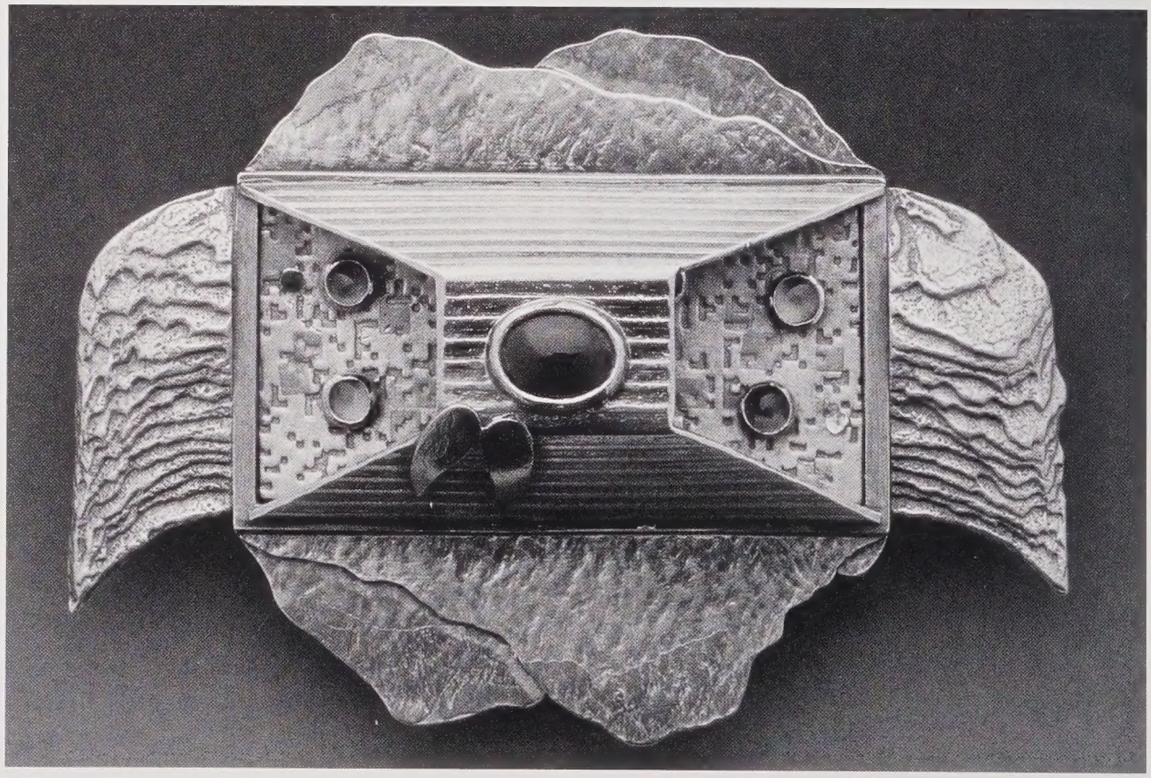
above
Mariko Kusomoto
Homeland 1995
copper, brass, silver, found objects
8 x 4 x 2"

right
Junko Nakazawa
Night Flight, 1997
2 x 2 x 1"

association. Each path arrives at the same aesthetic goal of nonattachment to conventional ideas of art or beauty. Along these lines, Richard Mafong's *Button Down Shirt* takes a conventional item from the history of Chinese labor in North America—the laundry—and sets it apart in a frame of gold foil. Mafong thus elevates the ordinary shirt while at the same time opening the viewer's imagination to its potential meanings and history. Cast in precious materials, Mafong creates an ironic commentary on contemporary American cultural values by turning the shirt into an icon set within an elaborate frame. Both ironic and poetic, Mafong's *Button Down Shirt* employs traditional Asian and contemporary European aesthetic ideas of transforming the mundane into something rich and strange.

In the realm of function, the amusing tea and coffee pots created by Komelia Hongja Okim play dramatically with the art of *feng-shui*, which anticipates the movement of *chi*-energy within the environment. Of Korean origin, Okim states that her work "reflects the principles of *feng-shui*, an Asian philosophy focused on the relationship between humans and their environment: a philosophical system of how to live and excel in harmony and nature." Her *Harmony #3 Coffee Set* is made with the traditional Korean metal technique of *kumboo*, which overlays 24-karat gold foil on sliver without solder or flux. It invites the user to grasp it from the finial-tipped, open-ended handles that lead to the slanted plump forms of the coffee pots. These forms move forward aerodynamically in space, suggesting birds and other natural forms. The witty lids of the pots make visible the vaporized steam as it escapes invitingly from the coffee pot, encouraging a sense of warmth, energy, and playful delight in the viewer.

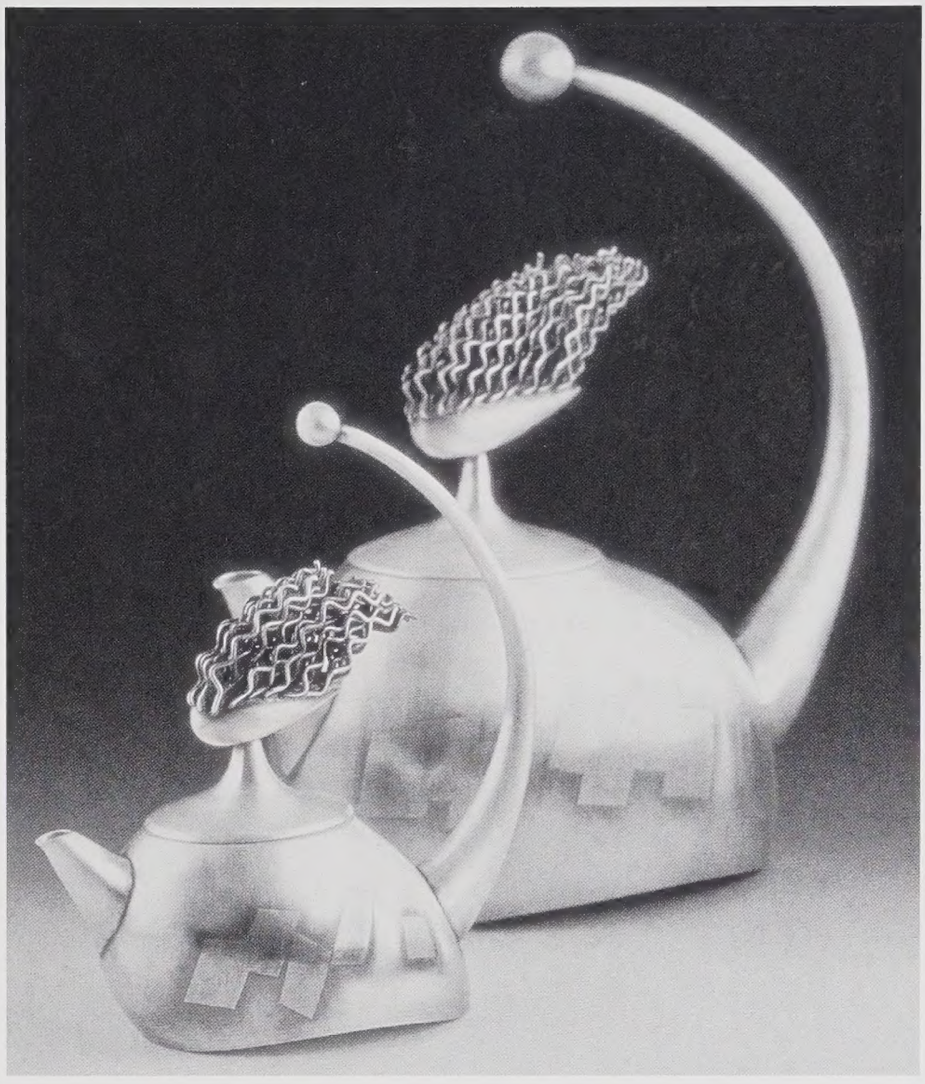
Finally, two works in the exhibition by artists born and raised in Japan, Mariko Kusomoto and Junko Nakazawa, give material form to the Japanese aesthetic values of *wabi* and *sabi*, which roughly translate as poverty of means, or poor, simple, rustic, irregular, aged, worn. Whatever shows unselfconsciously the workings of nature



possesses simplicity, and is therefore elegant. *Wabi* and *sabi* are achieved by the ebb and flow of natural processes over time, evoking memory, a sense of the evanescence of life, its loss and its preciousness, thus becoming the idea of the beautiful in Asian aesthetics. This elusive aesthetic lends itself well to such eccentric and evocative pieces as Kusomoto's *Homeland*, a cabinet with a door made of copper, brass, silver, and found objects. The door depicts a homely beetle symmetrically placed on a surface scarified by inscribed patterns. Some of these patterns recall the early pictographs or ideographs of Chinese and Japanese cultures, even the portentous archaic "dragon bones" of burnt tortoise shell whose patterns were used to divine future events. Kusomoto turns the beetle, whose realm is earth, into a symbol of transformative power because her surfaces suggest wear over time. Moreover, the door conceals a cabinet enhancing the sense of a secret, hermetic process.

Nakazawa's *Rain in the City* uses a winged form to enclose a seemingly industrial, machined object. Swallowed by the rugged, irregular surfaces that surround it, the industrial box is reclaimed by the persistent processes of nature. Nakazawa states that "intense and perfectly balanced shape, the highest level of skill, subtle and mysterious finishes ... those were the things I adore ... my work will reflect my experience of different cultures."

The exhibition "Asian Roots, Western Soil" gave evidence of a new, hybrid aesthetic informing contemporary art. The intermingling of Asian art motifs and aesthetics with the current artistic climate of irony and cultural critiques proves a sometimes uneasy but provocative relationship. The principle behind these cultural tensions lies in the authentic Asian understanding of the transformative potential of matter, allied with the contemporary deployment of art as intellectual comment. Art, like alchemy, relies on processes of cultural sublimation and transmutation to create a greater intensity and vitality for its audience. The magical potency of matter is conveyed vividly by an excerpt from an ancient treatise on alchemy, written by Wei Po-yang in the second century A.D.. The artist and alchemist are identified as one, as the alchemist turns the matter of gold into the elixir of immortality by ingesting it physically and therefore magically.



Komelia Hongja Okim
Harmony #3 Coffee Set, 1996
sterling, 24k gold, kumboo

Gold by nature does not rot or decay;
Therefore it is of all things most precious;
When the artist (i.e., alchemist) includes it in his diet,
The duration of life becomes everlasting.
When the gold powder enters the five-entrails,
A fog is dispelled, like rain clouds scattered by the wind,
Fragrant exhalations pervade the four limbs;
The countenance beams with joy and well-being. . . .
He whose forms is changed and has escaped the perils of life,
Has for his title the Name of True Man. ■

Celia Rabinovitch, an artist and writer, teaches fine arts at Cabrillo College, Santa Cruz, California. She is the author of the forthcoming *Surrealism and the Sacred: Power, Eros, and the Occult in Modern Art*, Westview Press, 2002.

[1] Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*. Second Edition translated from the French by Stephen Corrin, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago) 1978 p. 100.
[2] Mircea Eliade states, "Alchemy is one of those creations of the pre-scientific era and the historiographer who would attempt to present it as a rudimentary phase of chemistry, or indeed, as a secular science, would be treading on very shaky ground. (Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*, p. 13). See also Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) for an excellent history of this relationship.
[3] See William Theodore de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* Volume I, compiled by William Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, and Burton Watson (New York and London: Columbia University Press). "Neo-Taoism," "Belief in Immortals" and "Alchemy" pp.239-265.
[4] Marcel Granet, *Danses et Legendes*, p. 161, quoted in Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* p. 109.
[5] *Tao Te Ching* (London: Unwin and Mandala Books, 1976) translated from the Chinese by by Ch'u Ta-Kao, p.26.
[6] Ts'an T'ung Ch'i, ch. xxvii, translated by Arthur Waley, *Notes on Chinese Alchemy*, p. 11. Cited in Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*, p.115.

Brooch, 2001
black opal, 22k yellow gold
2 x 1"
Photo: Larry Stein

Brooch, 2000
carved chalcedony, pearls, 22k yellow gold
1 1/2" diam.
Photo: Larry Stein

Substance and Soul

The Work of Lilly Fitzgerald

by Shelly Wiles

Brooch, 2000
branch coral, 22k yellow gold
$1\,^{7}/_{8} \times 1\,^{3}/_{4}$"
Photo: Larry Stein

The jewelry of Lilly Fitzgerald is washed in serenity. There is a soothing balance, peacefulness, and grace to her timeless one-of-a-kind creations. Fitzgerald strives to select materials that demonstrate extraordinary character: all have spirit, an innate quality of life that, in her opinion, requires only an attractive frame to complete the composition. However, before this union can occur Fitzgerald, a self-taught metalsmith, must occasionally struggle with technical design problems that do not come as easily as does her ability to discover aesthetically pleasing materials. Nonetheless, she pushes her talents and resources, yielding creations worthy of a master goldsmith.

It is the difficulty of discovering inspirational materials that challenges Fitzgerald most. "It's hard to find materials with substance and soul—the right stone, piece of glass, interesting object, or funky little thing," she laments. It is those precious quarries, seeds for a glorious fusion of nature's morsels and gold, which launch her in a different artistic direction. This spontaneity, this searching for the true essence of the thing, is the whole basis of her work ethic. For instance, a beautiful piece of branch coral with natural markings resembling primitive dancing figures "just needed a pretty frame around it," Fitzgerald advises. The combination of colors and textures reveals her talent for sensual expression. A recessed frame of polished and textured 22-karat gold surrounds the porous, open-grain branch coral—a pristine specimen revealed sensitively through noninvasive, understated boundaries.

The same can be said for a remarkable aquamarine brooch: a marquis carved into the surface by Tom Muensteiner is mirrored by delicate hammer-set marquis diamonds branching off from the stone's bezel. Round-cut diamonds and spherical mounds of gold emerging between the bezel and outer frame create graceful echoes of the stone's shape without overpowering it. Yet another brooch, featuring an oval cabochon of quartz, receives an even higher level of enhancement. While a thin gold

bezel encircles the stone, a plenitude of tiny soldered gold spheres crown and cascade down the front. Although Fitzgerald does not do her own lapidary work, she did choose to sandblast the reverse of this quartz, which affords it the opaque, buttery hue. Sometimes, the centerpiece element is so exquisite that she envisions a gold frame that barely disturbs the stone's shape and appearance serving as a mere extension of the piece. Such is the case with a vertically deployed Montana moss agate, whose countenance evokes a single, charred pine tree looming, ghostlike and skeletal, from a smoky, emblazoned sky. The closely adhered bezel and matte texture of the gold base are sublime in their minimalism.

Fortunately, Fitzgerald's jewelry speaks for itself, as she does not like to talk about her work. Nevertheless, what she does say is quite poignant: "It's not a question of trying to be different, but finding materials with a spirit that speak to me. There are so many jewelers and so much stuff. At shows, I see a lot of derivative work: there is a very incestuous kind of inspiration that goes around when people don't get out and see things."

Fitzgerald's philosophy on jewelry making is simple: "I love design and drawing, finding, and getting the materials; then I enter the dark tunnel of the fabrication process, and come out the other end."

above
Brooch, 1996
quartz, 22k yellow gold
2 1/8 x 1 1/4"
Photo: Jonathan Kannair

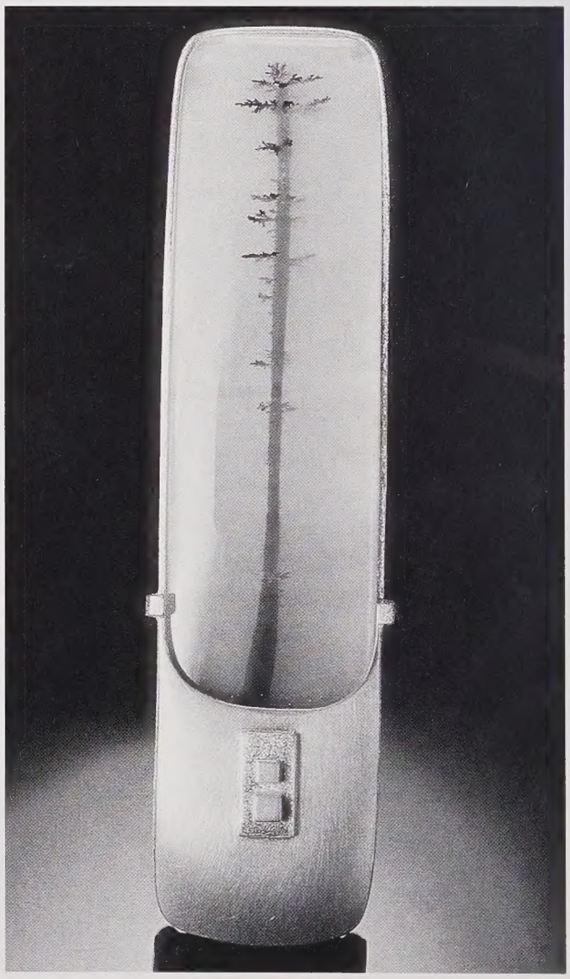
right
Brooch, 1998
Montana moss agate, 22k yellow gold
2 1/2 x 7/8"
Photo: Larry Stein

Fitzgerald's inspiration derives from subliminal impressions made by images or experiences from her daily life—a doorknob, a particular stone, and various natural ephemera. She expresses particular excitement over a series of pendants and brooches incorporating butterfly and moth wings in which an extreme contrast occurs between the fragile wings and hard metal. First, she cuts the wings, arranges them, sets a crystal over them, and hopes that they do not shift in their placement when she presses down firmly on the gold frame. Capturing the wings within the porthole-like frame wonderfully isolates their ethereally vibrant, iridescent colors and patterns.

Ironically, Fitzgerald does not deliberately set out to find her muses; they find her, spontaneously rising from images and places mentally stored during her frequent sojourns through Asia, Europe, and the United States, where nostalgic old buildings, museums, ironwork, and architecture serve as visual feasts. Nevertheless, she does not carry a sketchbook or record what she sees. "When something is stored in my memory, it just comes out; it's more like osmosis," she muses. She frequently conjures such recollections in elaborate detail and color back at her Massachusetts home while walking or running. Perhaps it is separation of time and place that allows her to meld impressions into her own creations, for she stresses that her aesthetic does not draw from any one specific cultural source.

The conceptual sketches she makes in her studio are unplanned. This is where the ideas from her travels resurface on paper. Fitzgerald visualizes exceptionally well in three dimensions. She appreciates detailed drawings and sees them as the floor plan for what happens in the gold. However, she admits that her drawings rarely make it to the bench completely, as the designs change in the metal. Many of her pieces are asymmetrical in design, which she feels lends a certain serenity. "My pieces have more balance than symmetry," she explains. A favorite treatment is the asymmetrical arrangement of accent gemstones or the off-center, angled display of an opal's highly patterned fire.

Fitzgerald's philosophy on jewelry making is simple: "I love design and drawing, finding, and getting the materials; then I enter the dark



tunnel of the fabrication process, and come out the other end. My main thrill is the end piece," she states matter-of-factly. On the reverse of a particularly playful piece, for which she selected a stunning blue chalcedony carved by German lapidary Dieter Lorenz, she backed the stone with a detail-incised plate of gold, perforated with holes, and set with pearl feet for balance. The holes have nothing to do with the transference of light through the stone; they are purely decorative. Fitzgerald feels that jewelry is more than just one-sided and enjoys incorporating little surprises and details; and, even though a goldsmith, she prefers looking at and handling jewelry more than wearing it.

She also loves control over the process: "But that's hard to achieve, not being a perfect metalsmith," she admits. Through maturation as an artist, Fitzgerald has become more demanding and has set higher standards for herself, whether in her choice of materials or the technical aspects of her goldworking. In some cases, spontaneous conceptual design grapples with technical reality to achieve the simultaneous appearance of balance and tension. In a most striking brooch, the broken circumference of sandblasted gold mimics the diagonal rust-colored, hairlike inclusions of a quartz. Meanwhile, the bezel-set stone is seemingly suspended in midair, its metallic, glassy reflection captured by the concavity of the frame's interior.

If Fitzgerald cannot solve the technical problems of translating a drawing into gold, she contacts Mark Agerholm, who has done freelance work for her over the past ten years. She values him as a precise technical wizard and an excellent craftsman. Between the two of them, Fitzgerald feels there are few things they cannot accomplish. For instance, while the concept of the rotating clasp of her South Sea pearl necklaces is common, Agerholm designed the internal stop mechanism inside the hollow chamber, adding extra security. Nonetheless, she explains that the need for technical assistance does not often arise. "My designs are pretty simple; I'm not trying to make things that spin around and play music," and true perfection is not something she seeks for her aesthetic.

Originally, Fitzgerald studied liberal arts at the University of Rhode Island and took classes at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art. Returning to Massachusetts, she studied sculpture and painting and took one semester of basic metals, clay, and fiber at the Worcester Art Museum. With an art history background, Fitzgerald learned the majority of her metalworking through trial and error and poring over numerous books and jewelry repair manuals. "I am not a technical person by any means," she laments. "I would have saved myself a lot of time if I had gone to a bench school to learn the techniques." Nonetheless, the jewelry that she began making as presents for her sisters grew into something larger. When their friends wanted to buy it, she made more. Soon, it began selling and she dropped out of school and started her business in 1976.

During the first couple of years, Fitzgerald worked with copper, as she could afford nothing else; nonetheless, she found contentment, as it is a metal that ages beautifully. Then, she worked in silver for three or four years, still due to expense. However, Fitzgerald did not like working with silver because she felt it did not combine well with the stones she was using. Finally, she began working with gold. Now, everything that she hand-fabricates is exclusively 22-karat yellow or rose gold, although hinges and catches are 18 karat. While her one-of-a-kind creations revolve around materials other than just gold, her limited production pieces are predominantly gold-centered and display repeated design elements that are often cast. Also prominent in Fitzgerald's production line are her signature swan earrings, a graceful combination of lustrous Tahitian pearls and fluid gold.

Pendant and Chain, 1999
butterfly wing, crystal, seed pearls, silk thread, 22k yellow gold
Pendant 1 3/8" diam.; chain 36"
Photo: Larry Stein

Still, after twenty-five years, the excitement Fitzgerald feels about her materials and jewelry is more important to her than if it sells, a problem that rarely arises. Amazingly, she admits that there have only been three pieces—all of them brooches—to which she was particularly attached. She is also committed to finding the right homes for her jewelry and is often brutally frank with people regarding their selection. The same connection she feels with her raw materials only intensifies through her creative process, a process that yields her innate ability to cultivate the spirit of things through the nurturance of gold. ■

Shelly Wiles is an editor and writer living in Massachusetts.

Hope, 2001
sterling silver, 18k gold, pearl[s]
height 3 1/4"

Faith, 2001
sterling silver
18k gold, Keshi pearl
height 3"
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

Earth Meets Mind

The Jewelry of Vivienne Jones

by Barbara Isherwood

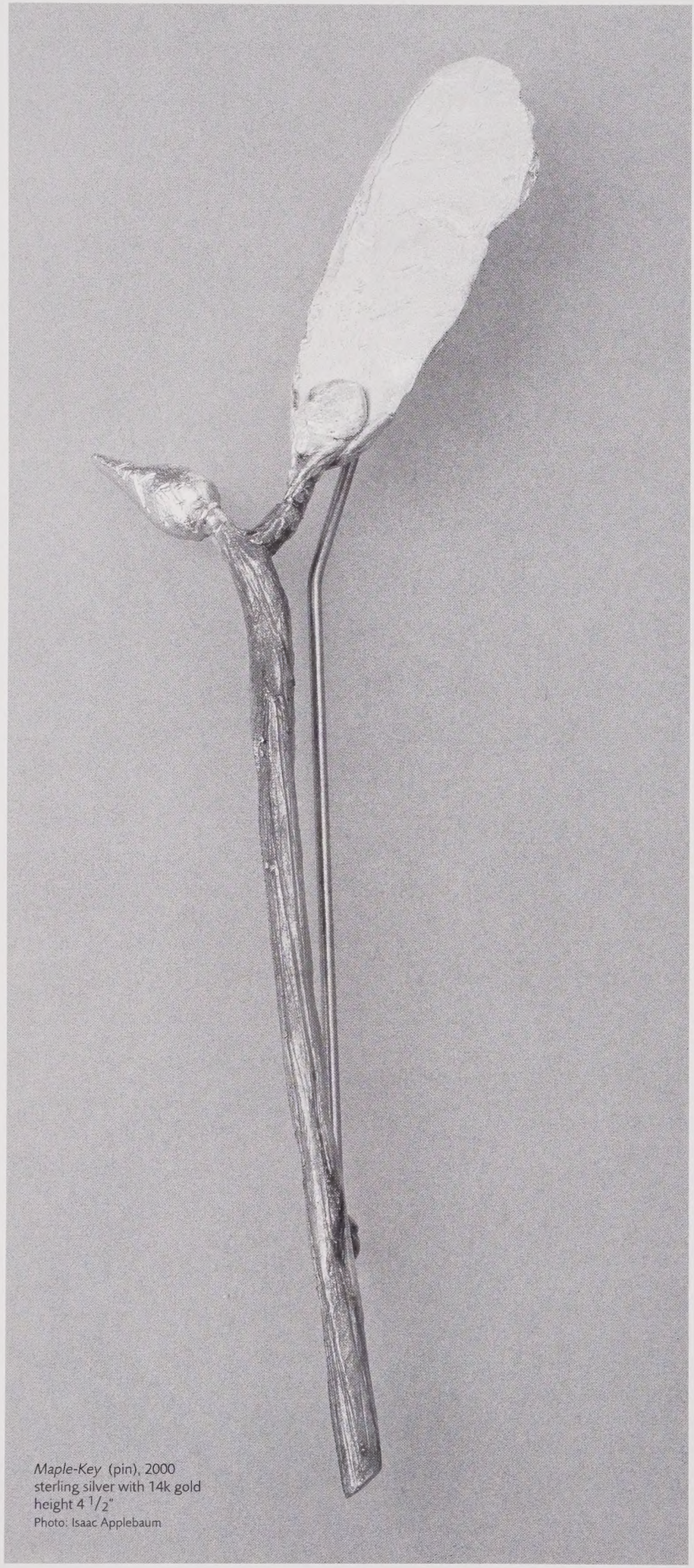
"I make jewelry the way I draw," says Vivienne Jones. "That's one of the great things about metal, you can do that." That Jones cites drawing, a very direct and personal mode of expression, as the closest parallel to her jewelry, seems fitting. Her reputation as one of Canada's preeminent artist-jewelers stems from a body of work that is likewise spontaneous, intimate in scale, and highly expressive.

Melange (necklace/bracelet), 2001
sterling silver, 14k gold, bronze, copper, pearls
23" long
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

It was, in fact, through drawing that Jones got into jewelry in the first place. Looking for a direction to pursue after a year of foundation studies at Swansea Art College in South Wales, U.K., she first thought of graphic design. However, a perceptive instructor, observing the small scale and detailed nature of her drawings, suggested jewelry. Although the idea of jewelry as a career option was new to her, Jones immediately saw the connection to her aesthetic. "The scale, I could relate to. My interest had been in line, and I saw this as line coming alive and having its own life off the page." The fluidity of the metal was the other appealing factor. "It's elemental, quite ethereal in what it can do," she says. "It didn't have to do with ornamentation. It had to do with magic things you could do, in that scale."

Jones completed her professional training in England at the Birmingham Polytechnic School of Jewelry and Metalsmithing, graduating in 1976. She came to Canada shortly after, to visit a sister, and never went back. As much as she loved Britain, she saw that making a living there creating her own work would be difficult. She took a job in the jewelry industry but made her own work right from the beginning. Response was good, and a few years later she was able to leave the day job behind. Throughout the 1980s Jones operated an open studio/retail outlet. The accessible storefront location helped her establish a steady clientele, as did word of mouth and numerous group and solo exhibitions.

Although she has lived in Canada for twenty-five years, Jones views her aesthetic as being rooted



Maple-Key (pin), 2000
sterling silver with 14k gold
height 4 1/2"
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

in her Welsh background. "Wales infuses my sensibility. It's so evocative, unspoiled," she says. "It has a presence. Maybe because people have been there for a long, long time. The land remembers." Looking at the work Jones has produced over the past two decades, one sees that the natural forms that are part of her heritage have taken a deeper hold over the years, spreading and growing stronger like a tenacious vine.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, organic forms shared the stage with angular elements. A generous sprinkling of gold and silver details in irregular shapes were applied as surface decoration in a seemingly random fashion that made perfect design sense. Imagery was suggestive, rather than explicit. Iconic motifs such as ladders, doorways, stars, flowers, spirals, and snakelike forms and occasional words evoked a wide range of possible associations—fantastic plants, alien landscapes, remnants of ancient civilizations, entrances to secret worlds, wizards' talismans, or the cluttered compartments of one's mind. By leaving space for the wearer's interpretation, Jones paves the way for a sense of attachment to the jewelry object as a conveyor of personal meaning.

In recent years her work has been inspired by the natural specimens she picks up while walking—objects that, although tiny, are capable of expressing significant messages about the world we live in. "I've tried to use those forms in my work, so we can treasure them, without just copying them," says Jones, who combines these organic shapes with those of her own design, to produce a hybrid offspring that resonates on various levels. Her approach acts as a metaphor for her perspective on humankind's relationship to nature—namely that even as we worship it, our reverence results in intervention and alteration, not necessarily for the good—we pick a flower, it dies. A truly unspoiled wilderness is one that is untouched by humankind.

The physical characteristics of Jones's jewelry echo the organic origins of its conception. Surfaces tend to be uneven and unpredictable and speak of earth and the effects of time. Castings often retain their "skin." Fabricated metal is textured and frequently patinated. A sense of movement, either implied or real, pervades. Working primarily in sterling silver and gold, Jones's self-described "organic approach" to creating is intuitive from the start. The process can begin with a drawing, a piece of her writing, or an inspired doodle produced while talking on the phone. Doodling while the conscious mind is otherwise engaged facilitates access to the bank of ideas and images that dwell

Bronze Twig, 2000
bronze
height 3 1/2"

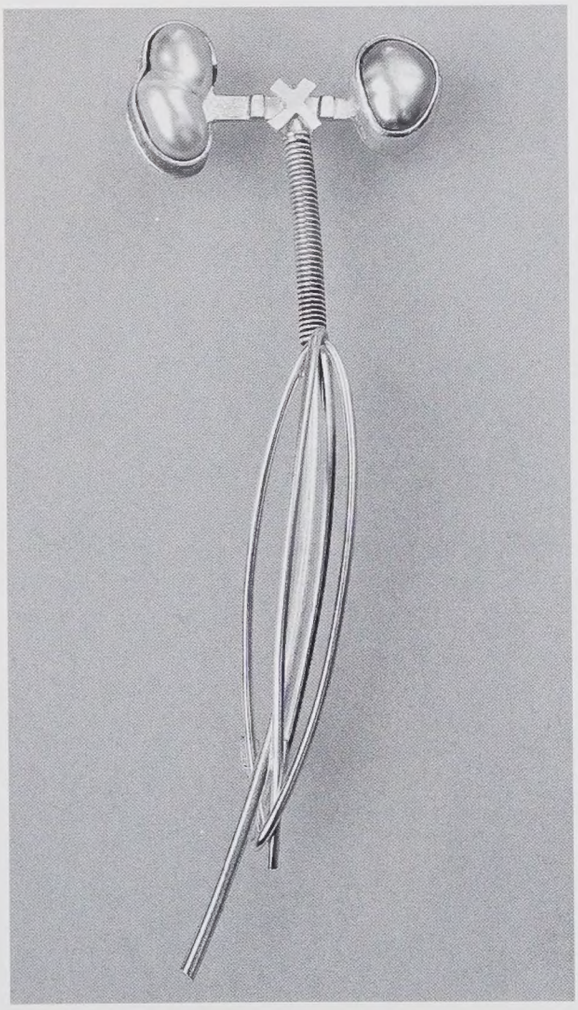
At this point in her career, her methods have become fluid. Working spontaneously, she builds upon a fabricated shape. Pins are a favorite form, for the freedom of expression they allow. Often the starting point is a long, stafflike shape. This connotes growth and movement, which she sees as metaphors for positive change. She adds to this basic shape, using the "building blocks" she keeps on her bench—small metal parts, originally fashioned in wax, then cast into sterling silver; castings from organic forms, stones; pearls; and tiny found objects, waiting to find their way into a piece when the artist's instincts tell her the time is right.

"It's very much like collage," says Jones, who works spontaneously. "There's always that element of growth and movement, and some elements of Surrealism that I often play with, but with a more realistic organic form." The free-flowing quality of her working method has parallels in the doodling process. Likening her torch to a pencil, Jones admits to really enjoying within the unconscious. Images in Jones's sketchbook recall the methods of the Surrealists, who attempted to produce drawings that emanated directly from the unconscious, through such devices as automatic writing and self-induced trances. By allowing fragments from her unconscious well of imagery to take material form, Jones purposefully exploits our collective memory and history, creating objects that are enigmatic yet familiar at the same time.

"It's not contemporary memory—I'm not using industrial imagery as a source. And I'm trying not to go the primitive route either. I'm more in the Middle Ages, up to Victorian, when the jewelry had significance."

Positioning herself firmly in the Surrealist camp, she has clear ideas about where her aesthetic lies. "It's not contemporary memory—I'm not using industrial imagery as a source. And I'm trying not to go the primitive route either. I'm more in the Middle Ages, up to Victorian, when the jewelry had significance." It is jewelry's ability to be a medium of expression that Jones finds engaging. "Jewelry is known for the power to communicate values," she asserts. "And you don't just leave it on the wall at home—you can wear that."

Given that "the feeling" created by the piece is, for Jones, the most important aspect of the work, her disinclination to get too caught up in technique is not surprising. Although she emphasizes the importance of good craftsmanship, it's strictly as a means to an ends.



Balance, 2001
sterling silver,18k gold, pearls
height 3"
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

the soldering process. "A lot of people are afraid of soldering. But it's what I do that gives it that extra element of surprise."

Finding a way to keep things interesting, both for herself and for her audience, is a challenge that Jones maintains is essential. Having to prepare work for an exhibition is one route to this end. In her last solo outing, "Memory: Recent Work," in the fall of 2000, the unexpected came by way of a series of bronze and sterling twig pins, so lifelike as to be almost indistinguishable from the real thing. "I've wanted to make twigs for a while," she says. "They're detailed copies I've made in wax, then had cast. That to me has integrity, in a way that casting directly from a twig doesn't." The series was prompted by our innate desire to preserve the ephemeral beauty of found natural objects and the feeling of connection to the earth they awaken within us. As Jones points out, simply removing such objects from their environment and sitting them on a shelf doesn't always work. "You bring it home, and it doesn't feel right." There is also the issue of permanence. Unlike metal, jewelry made from seedpods will eventually disintegrate.

"I've wanted to make twigs for a while," she says. "They're detailed copies I've made in wax, then had cast. That to me has integrity, in a way that casting directly from a twig doesn't."

Pod Form, 2000
sterling silver with 18k gold
height 3"
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

The range of colors Jones has been able to achieve with her patinas is truly startling, with shades ranging from a silvery pink to blue-green, deep red, and darkest chestnut. "I'm intrigued by making it look less and less like metal. That's the great thing about silver—it's so versatile. You can't do that with gold." The reduced emphasis on applied surface detail seen in the twig pins is evidence of the subtle shift in Jones's aesthetic. She points to a pin that incorporates an unadorned cast from an apricot pit as an example of this new direction.

While her more boisterous work continues to be an important component of her oeuvre, it now shares the stage with pieces displaying a more pared-down approach. *Balance*, a brooch created in late 2001, unites clean lines and keshi pearls in a pleasing asymmetrical arrangement. *Elemental Garland*, a sterling silver necklace from 2001, is composed of rounded and elongated shapes, drawn from nature and Jones's own psychic garden. The forms are given a gently darkened finish, suggestive of the effects of age and weather. Tiny incisions and bumps are the only surface interruptions, yet the piece retains a sense of liveliness through the unique character of each element.

Jones's bracelets occupy a particular space in her artistic world, acting as allusions to the jumbled state of our unconscious minds. *Melange*, a bracelet/necklace of sterling silver, 14 karat gold, bronze, copper, and pearls, is a delightful hodgepodge that combines discs, rings, and bands of assorted sizes with abstract and organic shapes reminiscent of found objects and vegetal debris dug up from the garden. "They're emblematic of that clutter of memory that we have—nonspecific feelings, and bits of things," says the artist, who staunchly defends our right to cherish that which is magical and unexplained.

The human tendency to be intrigued by the mysterious is what compels us to examine her pieces repeatedly, as we try to guess at their hinted meanings, or read into them our own. Some of her chimeras are reminiscent of the weird products of the Surrealists' exquisite corpse game.[1] In *Faith*, an antlerlike form, grows from the cast impression of a fruit pit. In another pin, a sterling silver stalk sprouts a pearl that resembles an animal hoof. These pieces recall a comment a friend of hers once made that Jones's

Elemental Garland, 2001
sterling silver, pearl
18" long
Photo: Isaac Applebaum

jewelry "looks like the way things do in dreams."

That her jewelry can act as the receptacle of our dreams, as well as her own, has led to many commissions for wedding rings and other special occasion pieces. Rather than see this work as a compromise, Jones views it as a welcome opportunity to create a piece that will have long-lasting meaning and play a significant part in someone's life. Since clients come to her because they appreciate her aesthetic, she has the creative freedom she needs to execute a piece that satisfies both herself and the buyer. Rings are the most frequent items requested by clients, and years of working in this form have led Jones to develop a distinctive approach to this most intimate form of jewelry. Lines wobble, suggestive of molten metal or twisted branches. Details draw the eye around the surface—while the tiny gold details that have been a staple of Jones's vocabulary are still there, now sometimes just small markings within the metal, or the actual shape of the ring itself, act as the visual path around the piece.

In recent years locally found fossils have worked their way into Jones's rings. At first, she set them as she would a stone. Then she cast impressions and shaped them into rings, the surfaces of which are enriched by the ripples and crevices left by tiny creatures who inhabited our earth eons ago. As with the twig pins, the fossil impression rings speak to the paradox of our being able to appreciate nature only through changing it. "I really think that these tiny little pieces of jewelry can capture those kind of ideas," Jones asserts.

In the pin *Faith re-born ... or, can you see the future?* she expresses her hope for humanity. A tiny plastic baby with outstretched arms perches on a crescent-topped staff, in front of a spiraling shell silhouette in iridescent silver. The baby evokes the qualities of innocence, purity, and new life, symbols of reassurance for these troubled times. "Ultimately, I always take the approach of being optimistic," says Jones, who is proud to literally wear her views on her sleeve. "It's an opportunity, in this world where everything is becoming so homogenized, to still make a statement." ■

Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based writer and broadcaster on visual arts and craft.

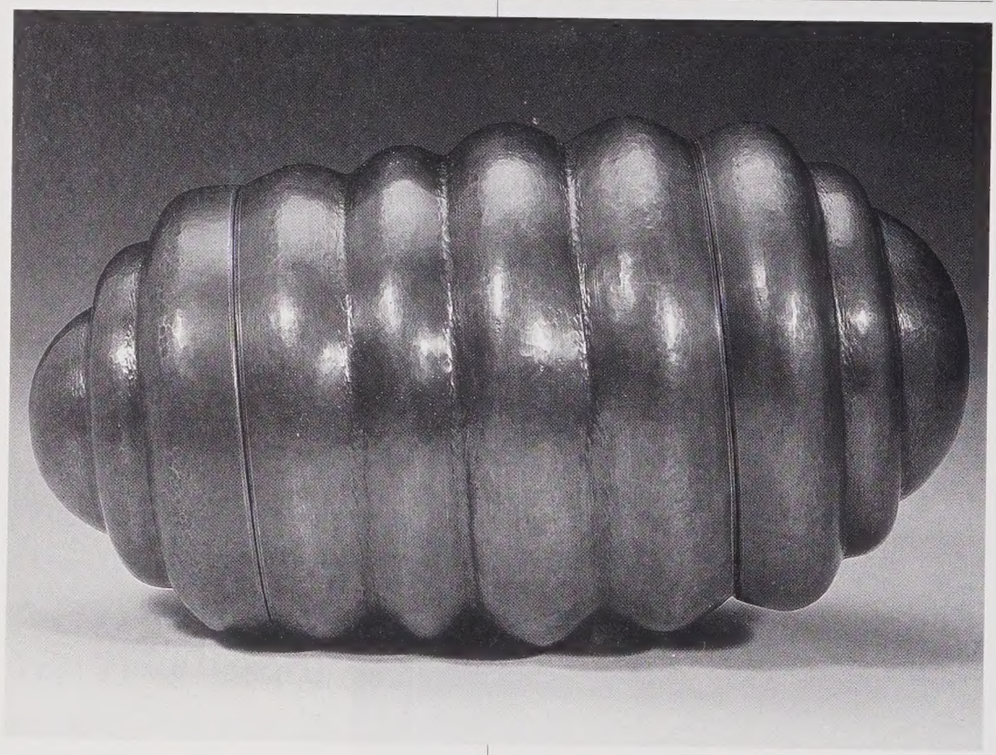
[1] A collaborative game using a folded piece of paper, on which artists would draw without having seen the preceding contribution.

Quotes are from conversations between the author and Vivienne Jones, September 27, 2000, and September 30, 2001.

"CATHERINE GRISEZ: THE BLACK BOX SERIES"

WILLIAM TRAVER GALLERY, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
OCTOBER 5–28, 2001

by MATTHEW KANGAS



Catherine Grisez
The Evolution of No, 2000
brass, copper, magnet, latex, and colored resin,
$6\,3/4 \times 6\,3/4 \times 12\,1/2$"

Catherine Grisez's solo gallery debut at William Traver Gallery featured twenty brass and copper bowls and four works in the form of music boxes. These represented the most interesting sculptural undertaking in the large grouping, but they emerged out of Grisez's very capable handling of the vessel form.

Is the vessel also sculpture? Without reiterating all the pro and con arguments that have already occurred in the ceramic and glass worlds, the answer usually is, it depends on the piece. Catherine Grisez's bowls are so finely wrought and exquisitely finished that they seem closer in some ways to high-style handmade jewelry than to the vessel/sculpture axis. At the same time, their inner depressions interact with the exterior surfaces in ways that at least offer formal contrasts. Hammered exteriors versus smooth interiors and bulbous interiors versus smooth exteriors seem the operative dichotomies. The dialogue is supported by undulating organic bumps that recall seedpods, kernels, and nutshells or, in a few cases, mini-topographical landscapes.

Bowl No. 21 (2001) and *No. 14* (2000) support the latter interpretation, with their, respectively, root-pattern base and fungus-growth interiors. *No. 14* has a walnut support for its irregularly curved exterior that is set beneath the bowl asymmetrically. Much of the difficulty with vessel sculpture revolves around formal issues of support, something Grisez avoids with her flat-bottomed solutions in most of the other works.

Bowl No. 15 (2000), *No. 18*, and *No. 19* (both 2001) divide the exterior wall into vertically and horizontally striated sections. The gently curving and creasing bands of *No. 15* distantly recall the lotus-shape pattern of Asian ceramics or perhaps Islamic metals. Graduated, bulging bands in *No. 18* and crimped lines in *No. 19* offer two other orderly patterns. At least Grisez has found ways to resist serial reiteration, and such individuality of each work pushes them closer to sculpture or high-art metals.

Size is the other issue plaguing metals artists with sculptural aspirations. Averaging six inches high, these works have an intimate and approachable appearance, all the better to communicate their considerable tactile charms.

As to the music boxes, Grisez brings something different and original to the realm of contemporary sound art. *The Evolution of No* (2000) is a giant larva shape in which both ends can be removed to expose four music box insertions. When the handles are twisted, each plays a different tune. Grisez gets around the commercial toy sound of the inserted music box mechanisms by having all four play at once, approximating a raucous medley of musical insect sounds.

Satiated (2001) also has a top and bottom lid, two smooth oblong steel rectangles with inner areas that contain seven music box mechanisms and copper and silver beetles and other assorted bugs. Here Grisez pushes toward something more sinister, nondescript from the outside, teeming with creepy life and weird musical sounds on the inside. The insects are situated beneath a twelve-part lateral metal grid and look remarkably real. The extreme contrast between exterior and interior is most evident in this piece: smooth cold steel versus elaborately fashioned copper and brass. This is a direction Grisez could pursue further, along with possibly using custom-altered music mechanisms the way other sound artists have.

The impressive workmanship of the interiors is set in better contrast to a sleek, machined steel container surface of *Satiated*. In the bowls, the uniformity and excellence of the workmanship throughout each piece may provide great tactile satisfaction but lends little tension to the works in terms of contemporary sculpture. It will be interesting to see how Grisez develops and whether she is able to balance the conventional, if beautiful, bowls with the more ambitious sound sculptures. It's the start of an idea rather than the full exploration of a concept that a more mature body of work would convey. Exquisite craftsmanship can be enlisted for contemporary art content—ecological fragility, cacophonous sound environments—without always resorting to a tradition that dates back to toys for the czars.

Matthew Kangas is a contributor to *Art in America* and *Sculpture* magazines and lives in Seattle.

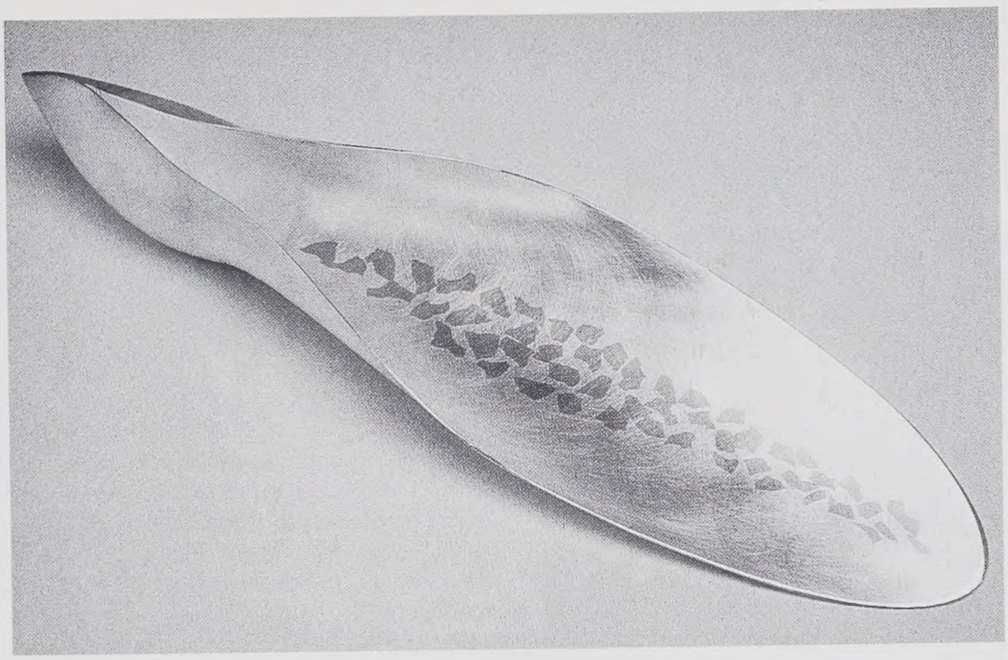
"100 PERCENT PROOF: A DISTILLATION OF NEW WORK IN JEWELRY AND SILVERSMITHING FROM SCOTLAND"

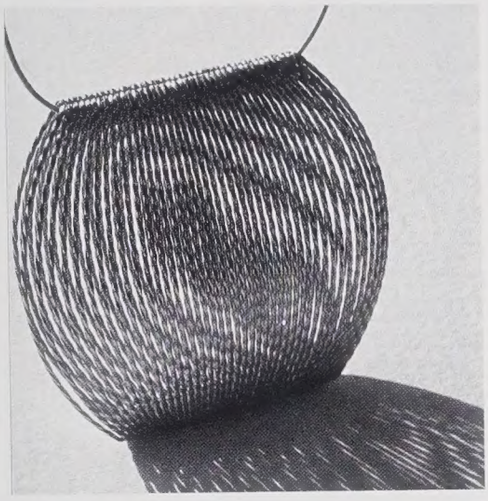
MOBILIA GALLERY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
AUGUST 21–SEPTEMBER 22, 2001

NEW YORK SCHOOL OF INTERIOR DESIGN, NEW YORK
OCTOBER 9–26, 2001

VELVET DA VINCI, SAN FRANCISCO
NOVEMBER 1–30, 2001

by PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON





Curator Dorothy Hogg tenders the idea that Scottish jewelry and silversmithing are enjoying a renaissance. This select exhibition of eighteen artists certainly supports her contention. "100 Percent Proof," organized by the British Crafts Council, the Scottish National Museums, and Velvet da Vinci gallery, included both the acknowledged masters of Scottish metal art and a number of highly accomplished artists still in their twenties.

Hogg's choices proved again the old artistic adage that the purely local is also the most universal. Most of the artists in "100 Percent Proof" either studied or taught at Scotland's two leading art colleges, the Edinburgh College of Art and the Glasgow School of Art. Edinburgh is widely acclaimed for its jewelry, Glasgow for its silversmithing. In the twentieth century, Scotland's artistic reputation rested partly on Celtic Revival work and partly on the protomodernism of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Hogg's selection of artists makes the aesthetic and conceptual bridge from these influences into the contemporary heterogeneity of Scottish metal art.

Hogg heads Edinburgh's Department of Jewellery and Silversmithing. It is fortunate that she included some of her own spare, formal jewelry in "100 Percent Proof," for her insistence on fluid geometry and clarity of line clearly informs the work of the generation that has followed her. Hogg's pieces are simple in their elements but tend to interact in complex ways when worn. Her *Noisy Necklace with Campanile Forms*, for example, functions almost as a string of small bells on the chest that roll and chime as the wearer moves. Her Edinburgh teaching colleague Susan Cross favors similarly simple forms, but her work celebrates the techniques of construction, using her masterful wire wrapping as both design and structural elements.

While the former students of Cross and Hogg have clearly internalized their teachers' clean modernism, they have evolved their own design vocabularies and concepts. Andrew Lamb, for example, is making extraordinary forms with twisted wire. Though some of his jewelry looks at first glance to have been constructed with fiber-art techniques—braiding or even crochet—Lamb relies on the metal's tensile qualities and memory of form to create shimmering effects of light and texture. Joanne Thompson, by contrast, works extensively with silver links and chain mail, achieving comparable textural effects by entirely different means.

If a common thread links the Edinburgh artists, it is their sense of line. Hogg explains that the student metalsmiths are required to draw constantly. The training remains most explicit in the work of Emma Gale, whose brooches in gold and silver impose tendril forms on flat grounds framed with thin bezels, effectively blending the pictorial and the sculptural. A similar pictorialism informs the brooches of Ann Little, whose work is characterized by a painterly approach to enameling. Their fellow Edinburgh student, Anna Gordon, works in more sculptural forms of jewelry, yet one of her key considerations always remains line, especially as it may be defined by the intersection of different metals.

"100 Percent Proof" presented a comparable modern tradition in sculptural silver, beginning with the sleek poise of polished silver and black iron of John Creed and the exquisitely chased forms of Michael Lloyd. But the nod for influence goes to Roger Millar, head of silversmithing and jewellery at the Glasgow School of Art.

Millar is often credited in Scotland for transmitting the traditional skills, techniques, and design principles to generations of students. His exquisite attention to detail and workmanship—a characteristic shared by all the artists in "100 Percent Proof"—might obscure his considerable contemporary design skills. Millar's functional objects, sometimes useful, sometimes symbolic, combine utility with beauty, as in the two-spouted oil and vinegar vessel with a jade disk as a handle for the lid.

Millar's students carry on his high standards but with distinctly different personalities. Marion Kane's pieces emulate organic forms, as if they were peeled off branches or represent animal skins suddenly transmuted into silver and gold. Her slipperlike cake slicer, in which the matte silver carries a trickle of forms in gold leaf, could not be farther from the engineered forms of Millar, but it shares a similar grace and accomplishment.

The honest utility and modernist design forms in the work of Grant McCaig owe much to Millar. But McCaig has developed an individual aesthetic, explicit in the silver seafood platter shown in this exhibition. The crisply folded pleats radiating from the center of the dish create a dramatic pattern of light and shadow, yet the design elements of the dish remain very straightforward and elegant in their simplicity.

Hogg notes that Scotland is a very small country, with a population half the size of London. "We're doing a good job," she says smiling, "supporting all these makers, don't you think?"

Patricia Harris and **David Lyon** are writers and critics based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

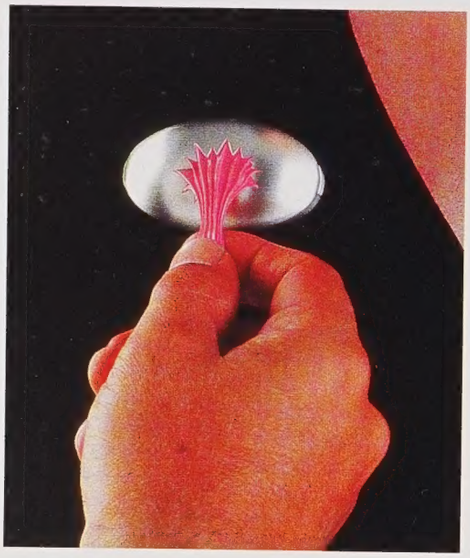
above left
Andrew Lamb
Wire Pendant, 2001
18k gold
$1\,5/8 \times 1\,5/8$"

above
Marion Kane
Cake Server, 2001
silver, gold leaf
$9 \times 3\,1/4 \times 1\,3/4$"
Photo: Shannon Tofts

"JEWELRY: INTROSPECTIONS AND MEDIATED INTERACTIONS"

I-SPACE, CHICAGO
SEPTEMBER 7–OCTOBER 6, 2001

by POLLY ULLRICH



above
David Akins
Elastic Affiliation 1, 2000
silver, Silly Putty
1 x 2 x 1"
Photo: Chris Kemp

right
Yeon-Mi Kang
Confusion, 2000
copper, sterling silver, gold leaf, enamel
2 x 2 1/4 x 1"

An exhibition of two recent graduates of the M.F.A. metals program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign hints at the diversity and expansiveness percolating in some of the freshest work being produced by emerging art jewelers today. In a two-person show at Chicago's I-Space, Yeon-Mi Kang and David Akins presented work that seemed to embark on widely different aesthetic journeys, yet both artists proved that intellectual content and poetic metaphor are embedded in some of the newest art jewelry, whether it springs from a minimalist, pure, and reductively formal aesthetic pedigree or from a dream-based, figurative, storytelling art historical lineage.

Both artists exhibited a series of handsomely executed brooches, all of which were meant to be displayed comfortably on the body and

therefore resonated with some of jewelry's most fundamental and satisfying characteristics—its sensuality and its liaison with corporality, its intimate scale, and its engagement with the subversively enticing aspects of beauty and preciousness. But these traditional qualities were a mere grounding for Akins and Kang, whose work—while appearing highly dissimilar—was essentially about ideas.

Akins produced what looked like a procession of gorgeous, spare, pint-size machines, primarily in fabricated silver or steel. These ironic brooches, with movable or elastic parts, invited precarious interaction with anyone encountered by the wearer—by pushing, pulling, scribbling, snapping—and were meant to engender a certain level of tension between two people. For example, a series of silver brooches, *Percussive Interpositions*, with cleanly reductive lines, proffered tiny triggers, which, when pulled, sharply detonated Chinese firecrackers called snappers—the kind that children throw to the ground and explode during Fourth of July holidays. In another brooch series, *Elastic Affiliation*, again made of a pale minimalist silver, globules of Silly Putty bulged through holes, inviting—daring—someone to pull at it. In an even dicier dilemma, a steel brooch blandly called *Volatile Relationship* featured a blue butane flame that spurted out at the viewer.

In statements, Akins has talked about jewelry's unique ability to thrust itself between the viewer and the wearer and expressed his interest in manipulating and emphasizing that highly charged exchange. In this regard, he is working alongside contemporary artists in numerous fields who are exploring as their subject the subject of art itself. While Akins' work tests jewelry's assumptions, purposes, and meanings, it also relies on jewelry's roots in performative action—as an art form that blends personal statement and private (bodily) space with public display and consumption.

Kang's inward, allusive imagery served as a piquant counterfoil to Akins's agile, extroverted work. Kang—whose sculptural but extremely light, electroformed and patinated brooches are based on masterly wax carving—has dipped into a rich repertoire of figurative and narrative sources based in Surrealism. Kang seems to have developed and concentrated the conventions of "the brooch" in general into a metaphor for the psychological quandaries of the human condition. Each Kang brooch forms a kind of Surrealist box or tableau, portraying a faceless, genderless, everyperson figure poised with a recurring number of peculiarly juxtaposed symbolic objects—a clock, the sky, a ladder, a hand, a bird. The work has an aura of strangeness; its imagery appears both profoundly idiosyncratic and universal at the same time. The pieces, for example, include *Where Am I?*, a brooch with the figure, in silver this time, emerging from water in a golden bowl, and *Confusion*, the figure now squeezing itself out of a gold frame, a disembodied silver hand covering its face—both like tiny stage settings constructed to convey tenuous psychological states.

Taken together, all of Kang's brooches seem like frozen, fragmentary moments within a larger narrative flow, their very inscrutability meant to kindle the viewer's interest in constructing a personal narrative around them. The emphasis on private reverie and existential themes positions Kang's work within jewelry's roots in the talismanic, in magic, in ritual, and in intimacy (one dedicates a piece of jewelry, for example, in significant or extraordinary times).

It is a clever construct of this exhibition that juxtaposing such widely varying new work—one based on an introverted psychological journey, the other based on extroverted physical action, one based on fluid narrative, the other based on formal, abstract design—should point toward a unified end. That is, the overriding thrust of much art jewelry now, while it is wholeheartedly grounded in historical tradition, involves finding and explicating meaning. Both Kang and Akins do just that, exploiting what used to be an explicitly private art form to explore issues in a wider world.

Polly Ullrich is an art critic in Chicago.

"JEWELED ARTS OF INDIA IN THE AGE OF THE MUGHALS"

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART,
NEW YORK
OCTOBER 18, 2001–JANUARY 13, 2002

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
FEBRUARY 24–MAY 19, 2002

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON
JUNE 30–OCTOBER 27, 2002

by MARJORIE SIMON

There were many reasons to make a special effort to view the Mughal jewels of India at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in October. One is that the gold and jeweled objects would be of interest to any metalsmith for their aesthetic, technical, and historical contribution. Another would be the reminder, in days closely following the attack on the World Trade Center, that beautiful man-made objects exist at all and, moreover, that these objects themselves originate in a part of the world that concerns us now—India and Afghanistan. On traveling loan from the Kuwait National Museum and rescued from the Iraqi invasion in 1990, these treasures of Islamic art span the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, when the Mughal emperors of India ruled the subcontinent. Vastly wealthy, they valued not only magnificent objects, but the craftsmanship, gem cutting, and goldsmithing that produced them.

The exhibition has been organized according to fabrication techniques, and accompanying texts are edifying to the general lay public. Technical terms are explained, beginning with the distinctly Indian process of kundan gem setting and including enameling, raising and forging, engraving, gold inlay into steel and stone (jade), and gem cutting. Hindi for pure gold, *kundan* is a method of hyper-refining gold so that it becomes fusible at room temperature. The catalogue states that the gold is so refined it is actually tacky at room temperature and so can be cold-fused under pressure of working with steel tools. A check with gold jewelry expert Richard Stone at the museum clarified the explanation. Any pure metal, with absolutely no contaminants on the surface, will bond to itself at room temperature, although normally some copper oxide on the gold prevents this. However, Indian goldsmiths were able to produce high-grade gold foil, roll it into little pellets, and heat it to red-hot in an alcohol flame, after which it could be worked with burnishers and work-hardened. Stones of many shapes and sizes could be easily set, including ribbons of channel settings. Unknown outside of India, the *kundan* technique made possible inlays even into stone (rock crystal and jade) in very fine tracery, also unknown before the twelfth century.

During the Renaissance, India was not completely isolated, and there is some crossover in use of enamels, particularly the use of champlevé and some gem settings reminiscent of thirteenth-century Frankish designs. Enameling was introduced from Europe in the sixteenth century, and its limited palette became known as "early classic Mughal enameling style featuring a luxurious buttery [opaque] white, a brilliant clean [transparent and temperamental] ruby red, and a superb [transparent] emerald green," as the catalogue describes. Guilloche (engraved parallel wavy lines) under transparent and even opaque white enamel was common.

Domestic and courtly objects include enameled and gold dagger handles, the large ring used to stabilize a round-bottomed huqqa (water pipe for smoking a combination of tobacco and opium), full-size curved sword handles and scabbards (at least one enameled with floral patterns like William Morris wallpaper in an innocuous-looking pink), jade backscratcher, fly whisk handles, cups and containers carved from jade or rock crystal, gold containers, enameled jewelry, and a set of gaming pieces in the shape of cowrie shells enameled in "green-ground Hyderabad," transparent over guilloche.

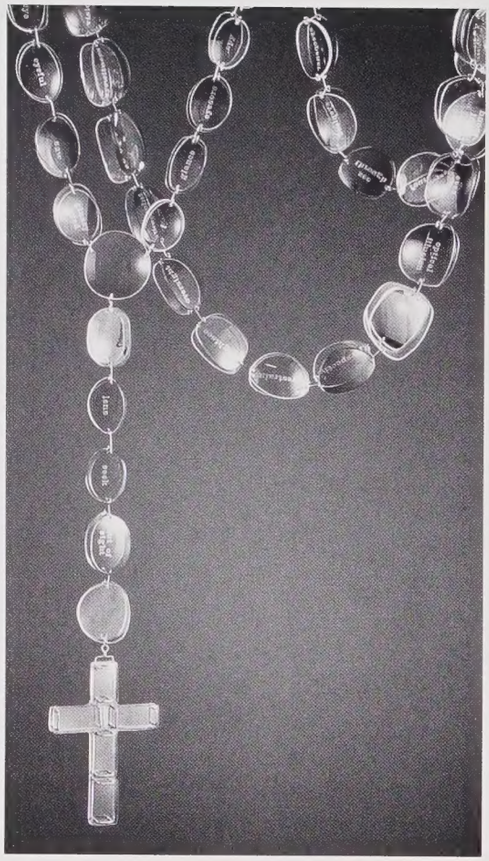
A combination of technology, abundant natural resources (diamonds, rubies, gold, jade), and a design aesthetic that fills every visual frame with ornamentation has resulted in a voluptuous undulation of colors and forms. Gold inlays are not recessed, or even flush, but raised; bulging ruby cabachons ooze out of their settings, catching the light and giving a liquid, living appearance to the gems.Overall is a sense of freedom and exuberance. The range of color is limited to red, green, and white, with an occasional turquoise or rare sapphire.

Must-see items: an extremely delicate cameo carving of the emperor Shah Jahan, in which strands of distinct pearls are visible in relief; the reverse is an intricate pattern of niello in silver; an accompanying opaque watercolor shows the emperor wearing the cameo; a forged gold torque necklace, hammered, chiseled, and punched into repeating vegetal and floral patterns of rosettes, seed coats, and Islamic ovals or honeycombs; a lidded cup and saucer, champlevé white ground enamel on gold; and a raised and chased gold huqqa reservoir more than six inches in diameter.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer.

left
Small Bottle, ca. first third 17th century
Fabricated from gold; worked in kundan technique and set with rubies, emeralds, and natural diamond crystals
Probably northern India
$1\,^{7}/_{8} \times 1\,^{5}/_{8} \times\,^{3}/_{4}$"
Photo: Edward Owen

above
Lidded Cup and Saucer, probably ca. mid-17th century
Fabricated from gold, with champlevé and painted enamels
India, Deccan, or Mughal
cup $2\,^{7}/_{8} \times 2\,^{7}/_{8}$"; saucer $^{5}/_{8} \times 5\,^{1}/_{8}$"
Photo: Bruce M. White



"ANGELA GLEASON: INDULGENCES"

SUSAN CUMMINS GALLERY,
MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA
AUGUST 7–SEPTEMBER 1, 2001

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

Imagine a series of six outsize rosaries that would not be out of place on a cathedral wall. Look closer, and you'll see that they have been designed by a skilled craftsperson, who happens to be ex-Catholic feminist lesbian with a powerful social message. Angela Gleason has converted the rosary, used by Catholics for repetitive prayers to gain "indulgences," or religious brownie points, for someone in need, to a potent tool for communicating her experiences as a (now-ex) Catholic daughter, marginalized-feeling lesbian, and critic of contemporary values.

The first impression of Gleason's work is awe at the size of most of the pieces, which range from a modest thirty-six inches into a whopping twelve feet. Each has been crafted from alternative materials, carefully chosen to reinforce its particular message—and the result packs a wallop. There's no pussyfooting around Gleason's use of craft to convey social commentary. At the same time she's downright funny, invoking a belly laugh followed by the "ouch!" that accompanies a home truth.

Failure to Communicate is a dual-track rosary of clear and rosy-colored eyeglasses bearing messages like "see," "shortsighted" and "glassy-eyed." In a prescient comment made before the September 11 tragedies, Gleason said, "I find it maddening that an enormous amount of the violence of the world is done in the name of one god or another. People killing people for not believing in the same god in the same way that they do. Everyone sees the same picture, but each individual filters it through his or her own experiences and beliefs." We also hear things differently or, more often, fail to listen. Gleason's *Complacency* rosary consists of familiar red-orange doodads, which on closer look prove to be earplugs.

Gleason has to take a few direct swipes at established religion. Her *Sin, Confession, Penance, Forgiveness* rosary connects erasers, and sterling and fine silver. It was inspired, she says, from a childhood message that "every sin we committed resulted in a dark mark on our perfectly clean souls. I pictured my insides covered in spots.... My mistakes could only be erased with remorse and prayer. Here is the perfect spot-removing rosary." Gleason's *Placebeo* rosary features prescription bottles, unleavened bread, and string. *Oh Please* is made from Scrabble letters. On one side they spell out the promise the Virgin Mary made to St. Dominic—"Whatever you pray for through the rosary shall be granted to you" while the other side reads, "Be careful what you ask for because it may be granted to you." *Fruit of Thy Womb*, a wearable rosary, possibly designed for the audacious and sexually active, consists of bezel-set birth control pills.

In our current mood of introspection and criticism of the status quo, there is a need for more artists who use metal as a vehicle for communication about social issues and who, like Gleason, believe that "something as simple as a piece of jewelry can contribute to the effort to change the world." In this quest, Gleason certainly ups the ante.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

left
Failure to Communicate, 2001
rosary beads made of prescription lenses, silver, vinyl, mirror
2 x 1/2 x 84"
Photo: Hap Sakwa

below
Barbara Becker Simon
The Maltese Fish, 2001
precious metal clay, synthetic corundum
2 1/4 x 2"

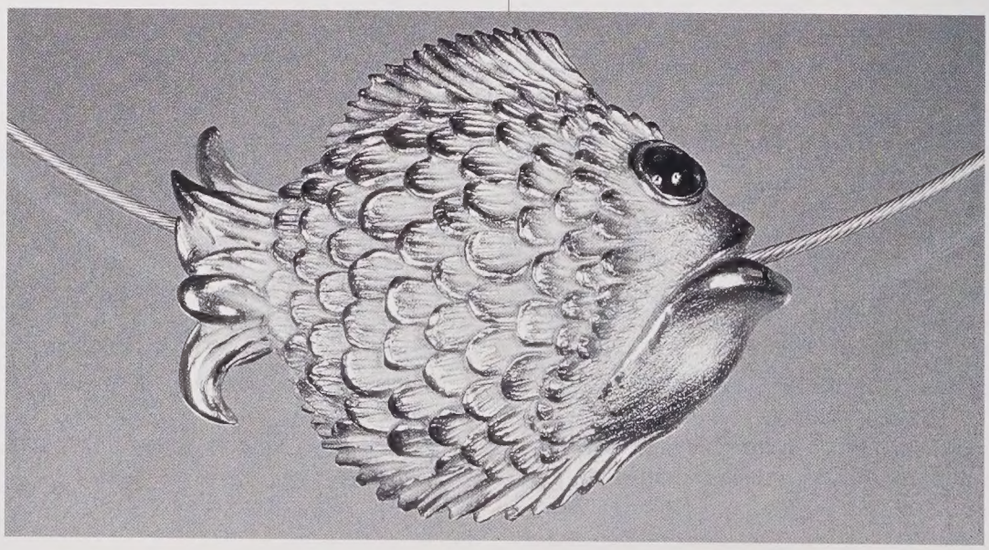
"MILLENNIAL METAL: THE ART OF PRECIOUS METAL CLAY"

BROOKFIELD CRAFT CENTER, LYNN TENDLER BIGNELL GALLERY, BROOKFIELD, CONNECTICUT
AUGUST 26–OCTOBER 21, 2001

by TONI GREENBAUM

I have rarely looked forward to an exhibition with more enthusiasm than I did "Millennial Metal: The Art of Precious Metal Clay." The reason centered mainly on my excitement concerning the introduction of a totally new concept in material for metalsmithing: genuine silver and karat gold that can be modeled like clay. This revolutionary medium was introduced in the United States in 1995 and consists of pure silver or gold particles, less than twenty microns in diameter, suspended in water and an organic binder that evaporates when fired in a kiln. The resultant property is solid metal, which can then be ground, buffed, and polished. Precious metal clay (PMC) has remarkable plastic qualities, lending itself equally to sculpting as well as die stamping. Most significantly, it offers the maker an opportunity to manipulate metal directly without forging, chasing, engraving, etc.; and although PMC has a 30 percent shrinkage factor, theoretically it has the potential to render casting obsolete or, at the very least, offer an attractive alternative.

This ambitious exhibition, both invitational and juried, was curated by jeweler Linda Kaye-Moses, a certified PMC instructor, and comprises eighty-eight pieces by thirty-six makers. I must admit, however, that despite the curator's industry and passion, I was somewhat disappointed. For the most part, the styles of much of the jewelry presented are decidedly behind the times, which is ironic given the progressive nature of this medium. Many pieces are too overly crafted and "fussy," combining disparate material and formal features in tedious juxtapositions, resulting in ungainly designs. The least interesting offerings are those that utilize commercially cut and tumbled semiprecious stones or mundane glass beads in combination with handmade PMC



beads or ribbonlike strips, which have been impressed with a variety of textures. Although the overall effect might be capable from a technical viewpoint, the PMC bits read as practice series rather than aesthetically resolved entities and all too often create cacophony rather than harmony with their neighbors. Some pieces are too derivative of ancient examples, typically low relief medallion jewelry. But although well crafted, they are, nonetheless, no more than technical exercises or unimaginative copies of historical styles. One can't help wanting to see, rather, in this instance, a modern twist on old ideas.

There are, however, exceptions. Not surprisingly, jewelers well schooled in the processes of polymer clay have created some of the most successful pieces. Used to working with a doughy substance, makers such as Kathleen Dustin and Cynthia Toops have created exciting jewelry. Dustin, especially, shines with four neckpieces that lyrically combine PMC elements with intricately inlayed and highly polished polymer clay beads. PMC is, in fact, a welcome addition to the polymer clay arsenal, providing a method for the latter to be used in a more jewelry-like format. Parenthetically, not all craftspeople that use polymer clay see PMC as an asset. Pier Voulkos, for example, arguably the most prominent of the polymer clay artists, has rejected the substance, due to the finishing procedures required for metal, with which she is uncomfortable.

PMC is most effective when used in a three-dimensional format, and not surprisingly, the pieces in this exhibition that possess a strong sculptural presence are the most successful. Noteworthy are *Rope Lei Necklace* and *Ginger* pendant by Sue Amendolara, the latter boasting a large and luscious PMC flower, and *Kauna'oa and Coconut on a Cone* by Candice Wakumoto. The most impressive piece, however, is The *Maltese Fish* by Barbara Becker Simon (who won the Grand Prize for a necklace titled *Winter*). A realistically detailed silver fish, the central focus of this otherwise simple necklace, displays the most accomplished use of PMC in the exhibition. It is truly beautiful, boasting crisp detailing, sculptural grace, humor, and a lifelike sense of movement.

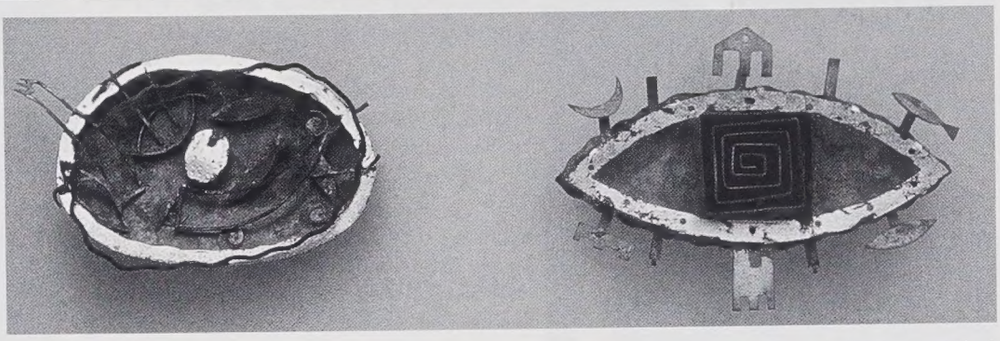
In all fairness to "Millennial Metal," it is essential to remember that PMC is still in its infancy. Perhaps some of the participants were just too preoccupied with medium at the expense of concept. Eventually, additional artists will experiment with PMC, and certainly, both more adventurous and sophisticated jewelry will emerge. Even Linda Kaye-Moses, in her curatorial statement, admits: "[PMC is] a material whose creative borders have not yet been reached (or perhaps even imagined)." One hopes that "Millennial Metal: The Art of Precious Metal Clay" is just the beginning.

Toni Greenbaum is an art historian specializing in twentieth-century jewelry and metalwork. She lives and works in New York City.

"EL LABORATORIO DE LA JOIERIA 1940–1990"

MUSEU DE LES ARTS DECORATIVES,
BARCELONA, SPAIN
JANUARY–NOVEMBER 2001

by ROB JACKSON



"El Laboratorio De La Joieria 1940–1990" (The Jewelry Laboratory) at the Museu de les Arts Decoratives in Barcelona, Spain, chronicles fifty years of contemporary Catalonian jewelry. The 120 pieces by thirty-two artists are beautifully showcased, which makes their presentation almost as seductive as the works themselves. The exhibition is organized without regard for chronology into four thematic groupings: "Nature," "Appearance," "Process," and "The Individual." Further thematic subdivisions address some of the conceptual ideas jewelers have been concerned with over the years. The work reflects international issues in that it demonstrates studio artists' attempt to break from the material value of the medium into purer expressive values.

The first subdivision of the "Nature" section is "The Capture of Nature," which focuses on 1950s concerns of the recovery of the primitive, the use of so-called poor jewels such as beach stones and shells that reject the obvious preciousness of cut gems. Works by Ramon Oriol and Manuel Capdevila bring to mind the likes of Philip Morton and other American jewelers of the time. "Material Reigns Supreme" expands upon this theme with the incorporation of lesser materials, perhaps best expressed in Joaquim Capdevila's elegant 1968 necklace of rusted steel, brass, and paint. Carles Codina's more contemporary approach continues this trend with his 1998 ring made from an unspecified wood, stone, and gold plate. "Portable Microcosms" features work that expresses nature through invented worlds. The framework of Ramon Puig Cuyas's brooches, *La Piscina: L'illa* (1991) and *La Nedadora* (1989), become wearable stages that house the playfulness of their own world.

Color, volume, and scale are addressed in the "Appearance" section. Josep Civit's 1950 enameled brooch is one example of "loquacious color," influenced by Modernista preoccupations with enamels, paint, and acrylics or with "illusion of volume," in which false perspective and hollow forms bring the viewer into the interior of the work. Marilia Maria Mira's 1992 voluminous *Fermall* is a windmillesque construction of varnished paper over a wire framework and back-to-back brass funnel forms that draw to the center like an hourglass. The subdivision entitled "Seduction of the Miniature" addresses issues of scale and wearability. Carmen Amador's 1997 *El Camino* gracefully articulates miniature ironwork, while Carles Codina's 1998 ring features a small seated figure dwarfed under a monolithic coral rising an inch or more off the finger.

"Rhythms and Mechanisms," "Drawing on the Body," and "Conjugating—Contrasting"—all subsections of the "Process" grouping—position materials in the context of construction. Maiane Fradera employs materials such as steel, aluminum, and porcelain in complex kinetic structures that suggest the tension of their own framework. Ramon Puig Cuyas's 1997 brooch *Constel-lacio* contrasts implied movement of a whirling array of wires with their frozen, motionless status; like Silvia Walz's "Espantaocells," technique becomes the vehicle for spontaneity, achieved through the use of both precious and nonprecious material.

The section titled "The Individual" engages works best characterized as narrative and introspective. One subdivision, "With All Five Senses," showcases works by Marilia Maria Mira such as *Bat Flight MM92* and *Fly Baby Fly*, a 1992 ring in which a one-and-one-half-inch cube pierced with silhouettes of airplanes encases a wax baby's head, apparently in a state of reverie. Another, "Rituals," displays Monica Fugarolas's *La Reina: El Rei* , featuring wire, cloth, and thread figurines. The "Introspection" subsection is distinguished by Carles Codina's formal *Assemblage*, in which a ring, mounted on its own schematic drawing together with a photograph of its organic inspiration, seems to almost clinically document its own identity.

There maybe some flaws with the organization of the exhibition; many of the pieces could fit into more than one category, and other areas might have been explored. Nonetheless, this ambitious exhibition succeeds in documenting the artistic stylization, growth, and range of Catalonian jewelers.

Rob Jackson is assistant professor of jewelry/metals at University of Georgia in Athens.

Ramon Puig Cuyas
La Piscina: L'illa, 1991 (left)
La Nedadora, 1989 (right)

COMMISSIONS

by Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman

clockwise from above
Anne Larsen Hollerbach
Anniversary Necklace, 2000
Vitreous enamel, silver, gold foil, cloisonné wire, gold, gold/sterling bimetal, pearls, peridot, carnelian beads
Pendant: 1 3/4 x 2 1/4"
Photo: Robert Diamante

Jon Havener
Cascade, 2000
Copper
5 x 5'
Photo: Scott Cool

Melissa Huff
Donna's Pearls, 2001
Enamel, electroformed copper, sterling silver, baroque pearls
1 3/8 x 3/4 x 3/4"
Photo: Wilmer Zehr

Anne Larsen Hollerbach, *Anniversary Necklace, 2000*
Commissioned by: Ron Wenaas

Cloisonné poppies in this *Anniversary Necklace* celebrate not only a thirty-year marriage, but also a highly successful collaboration between artist and client. Hoping to honor his upcoming thirtieth wedding anniversary in a new way, Ron Wenaas commissioned metalsmith Anne Larsen Hollerbach to create a unique necklace for his wife, Susan. Hollerbach, a veteran of custom craft jewelry design, began by asking a series of questions; sensitive to his wife's preferences, Wenaas responded that Susan admires the art of Georgia O'Keeffe, enjoys being outdoors, dresses informally, and favors orange and other bright, warm colors. Envisioning a necklace that would echo its wearer's preferences, Hollerbach proposed a pendant with a floral element, specifically California poppies, the "exuberant" flowers that "grow in adverse conditions, have intense colors, and wonderful linear qualities that would work well in cloissoné." Since pearls are the traditional thirtieth-anniversary gift, Hollerbach designed the necklace of freshwater pearls strung with carnelian beads and peridot (Susan's birthstone). To fashion the 1 3/4-inch circular pendant, the artist laid vitreous enamel on fine silver, with 24-karat gold foil under the red enamel. Bending more than 2 1/2 feet of wire to delineate the poppies was the most complex cloisonné work Hollerbach has done to date. After fifty hours of fabrication, Hollerbach presented the memorable necklace to the Wenaases for their thirtieth wedding anniversary in December 2000.

Jon Havener, *Cascade*, 2000
Commissioned by: Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas

Jon Havener's copper *Cascade* stands "first and foremost as a sculpture," though it becomes a fountain during the summer months. The sculpture provides a focal point for the new plaza adjacent to Willard Hall, a historic dormitory on the Pittsburg State University campus. When university officials requested a water feature for the plaza, the architect directing Willard Hall's recent renovation suggested Jon Havener for the commission. Havener, who began his career crafting jewelry and silversmithing, now uses the same tools to create larger, often functional site-specific sculptures from metal. Though the university chose the location for the sculpture and its pond, Havener was given no other stipulations. His abstract design combines sharp angles, spiraling curves, and steps in a "turbulent" composition that "echoes the action of moving water," according to Havener. The seasonal flow of water through the fountain heightens the sense of movement inherent in the sculpture itself. Havener chose to make *Cascade* from copper for its malleability, its color, and its coordination with the copper architectural detailing on the nearby brick dormitories. He and his assistant fabricated and welded the entire piece on a fifteen-thousand-dollar budget, while the university supplied the pond's

electrical and plumbing mechanicals. *Cascade* was installed in October 2000; landscaping of the plaza is not yet complete.

Melissa Huff, *Donna's Pearls*, 2001
Commissioned by: Donna Zajonc

Melissa Huff's eclectic résumé includes her roles as manager for classic jazz and folk musicians as well as metalsmith and jewelry designer. After years in the music business, Huff began studying metalsmithing and enameling at the University of Illinois in 1990, founding her own studio in Champaign five years later. Though she has designed jewelry, vessels, and small sculpture, she had not taken on commissioned work until recently. A former music colleague, Donna Zajonc, asked Huff to create a pair of earrings in the style Huff has developed—enameled electroformed copper jewelry whose forms echo botanical shapes and structures. Zajonc asked the artist to incorporate a pair of fully drilled baroque pearls, a gift from her three sons. Though Huff had rarely used stones in her jewelry, she felt the pearls' irregular shape could complement the free-form lines of her work. To begin the process, Huff gathered real leaves, bunched them together into two organic shapes, electroformed them with copper, then removed the leaves by burning them out. She applied blue-green enamel into recesses in the copper, using champlevé. Last, she strung the pearls on sterling silver wire so that they rest in the curve of the copper crescents. Zajonc received the earrings with pleasure at her retirement party, attended by her three sons, in May 2001.

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Exhibitions Abound at Denver SNAG Conference

Conference hosts, the Colorado Metalsmithing Association, have put together fifteen spectacular juried and curated exhibitions of jewelry and metalsmithing in conjunction with the upcoming SNAG conference, June 12–16 in Denver, Colorado. The diverse visual offerings include the premiere of the SNAG/3M Competition exhibition at the award-winning Center for the Visual Arts at Metropolitan State College; "Metals: The Colorado Connection," at the Denver International Airport; "Steel City–Contemporary America in Metals," at the prestigious Sangre de Cristo Arts and Conference Center; "Sculptural Attitudes" at Show of Hands Gallery; "State of the Art–Gold & Platinum," at the Richard Kimball Gallery; and much more. A tour of most of the exhibitions will be part of the conference program.

The conference Connections Room will offer students the unique opportunity to learn about and meet faculty from approximately forty educational institutions ranging from summer workshops to graduate schools.

The Portfolio Review sessions will provide students and emerging artists the chance to get feedback on the presentation of their work, as well as career counseling. This event offers fifteen-minute, one-on-one meetings with gallery owners and established professionals in the field.

Find more information about conference programming and our new on-line conference registration on our website, www.snagmetalsmith.org. Conference fees for students begin at just $85.

New EAC member Claire Sanford

EAC Chair Linda Threadgill
Photo: James Threadgill

New Editorial Committee Members Appointed

John Perreault and Claire Sanford have been appointed to the *Metalsmith* Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC). They join current EAC members Barbara Minor, Board Liaison Jan Baum, new Chair Linda Threadgill, and *Metalsmith* editor Suzanne Ramljak. The EAC serves as an information and feedback resource for the editor and also helps to coordinate the annual Exhibition in Print.

Perreault has a wealth of experience as a highly respected critic and curator. He has held the position of Editor of *Glass* magazine since 1996. Sanford is a widely exhibited artist who produces both one-of-a-kind and production jewelry and holloware. She has served on the Boards of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston as well as the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts.

SNAG wishes to thank retiring EAC members Marjorie Simon and Kathleen Browne for their extraordinary contribution to *Metalsmith* over the past four years.

Building Bridges: New SNAG Outreach

Over the past few years SNAG has worked hard to build relationships with a wide range of craft and jewelry organizations. Last year we received three years of financial support from the American Craft Council for our Minority Outreach Grants to High Schools. We will now be partnering this program with the Manufacturing Jewelers and Suppliers of America (MJSA) Educational Foundation's closely related Tools for Schools program. SNAG and MJSA are confident that combining the two programs will be mutually beneficial and will allow us to reach and serve a wider audience.

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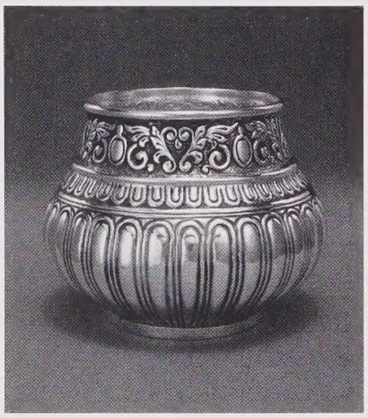

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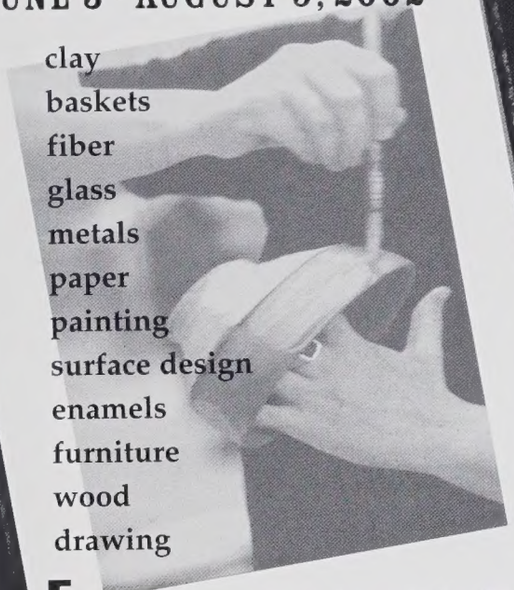

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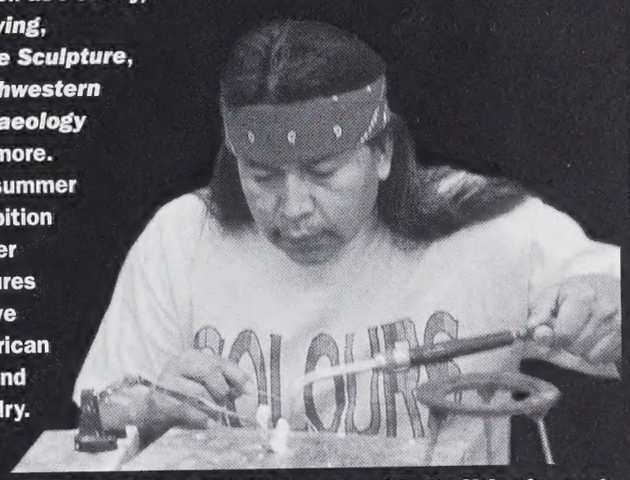

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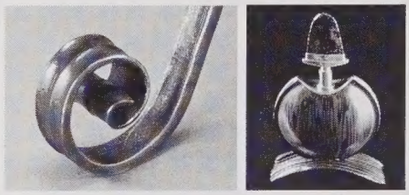

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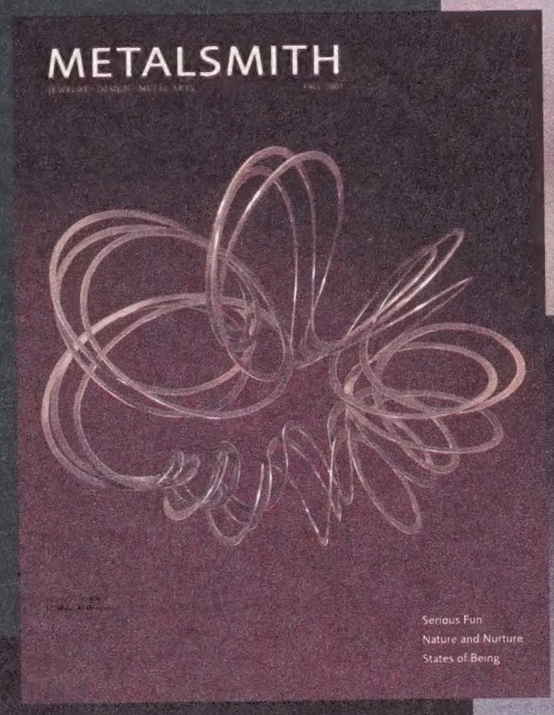

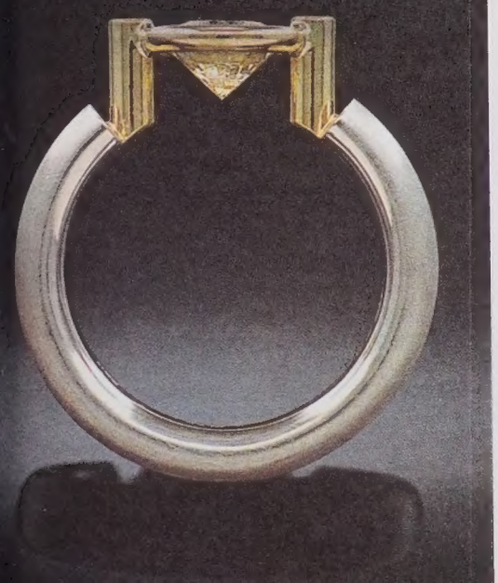

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opposite page, clockwise from top

Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Cup with Oval, 1998
sterling silver
5 x 4 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Ron Boszko

(Fall 2001 *Metalsmith*)
cover: Reiko Ishiyama
Bracelet, 2000
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
Photo: Todd Flashner

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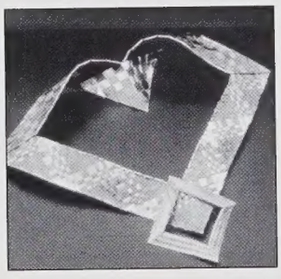

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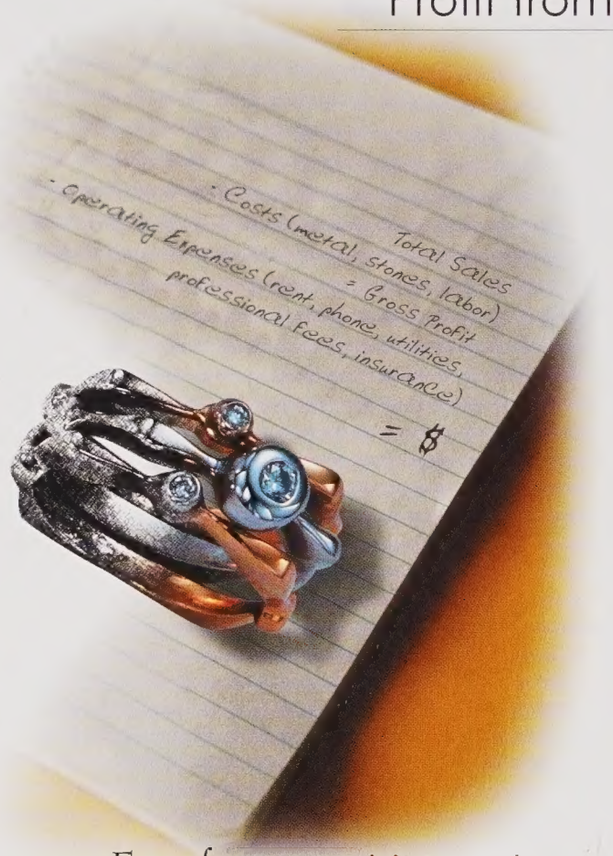
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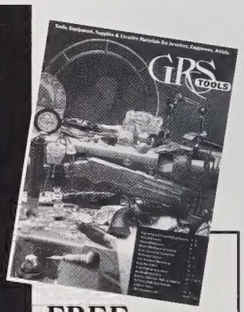

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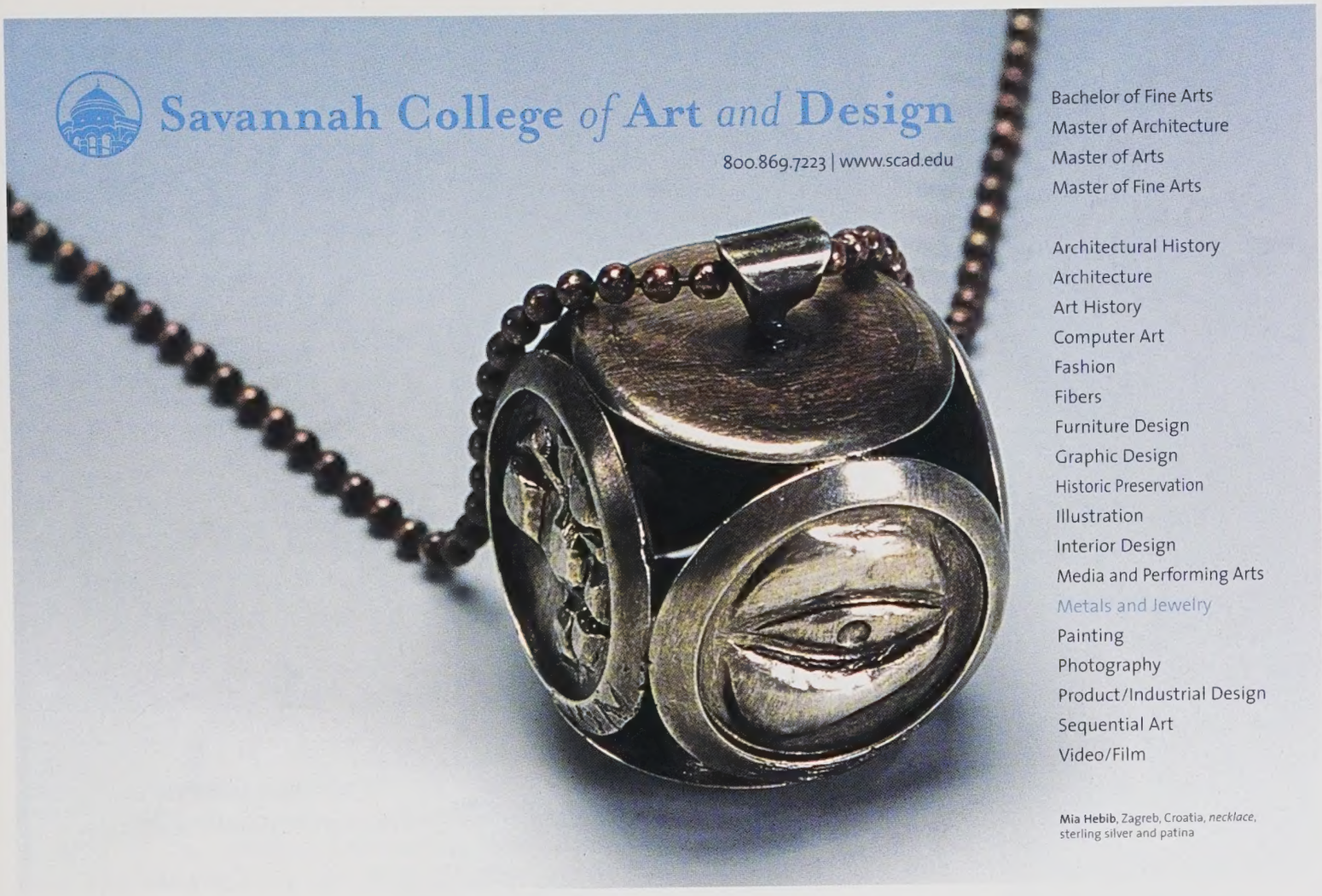

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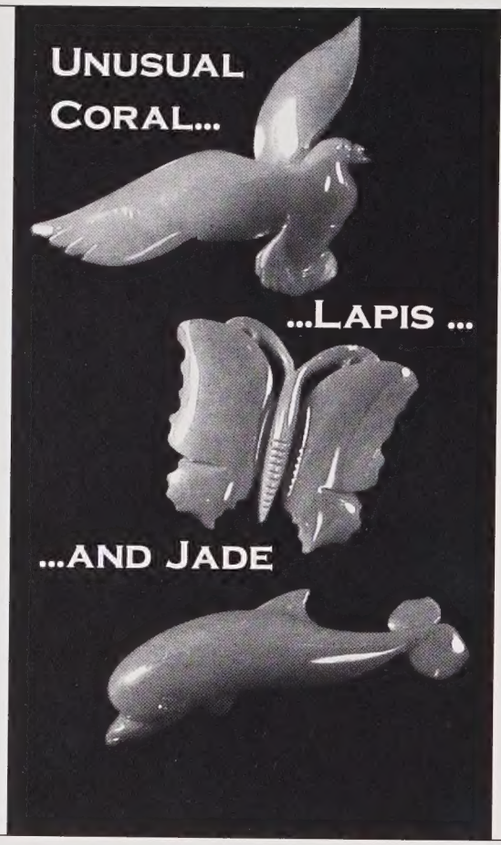

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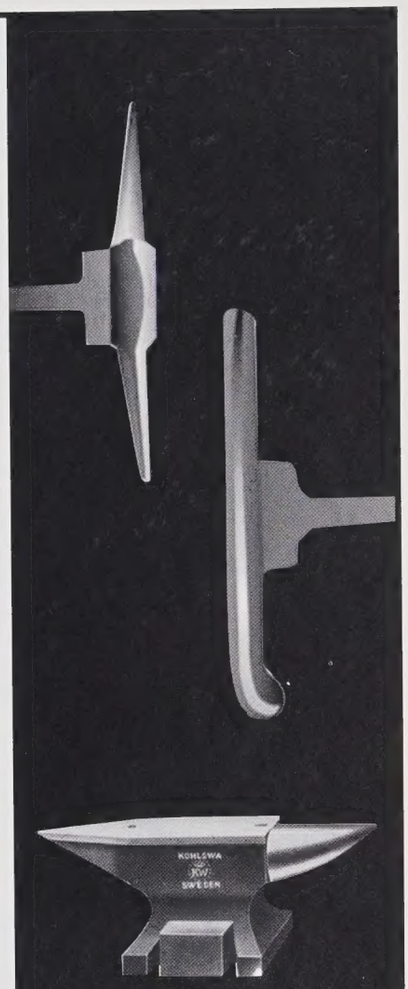

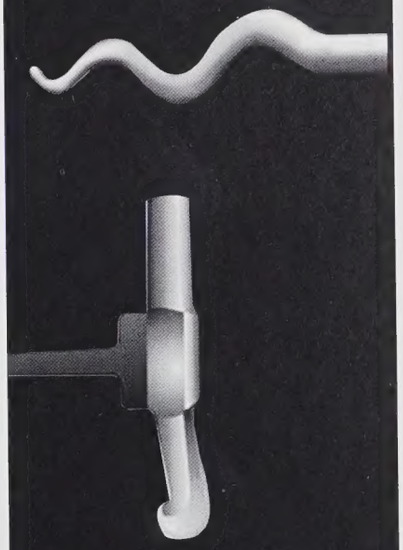

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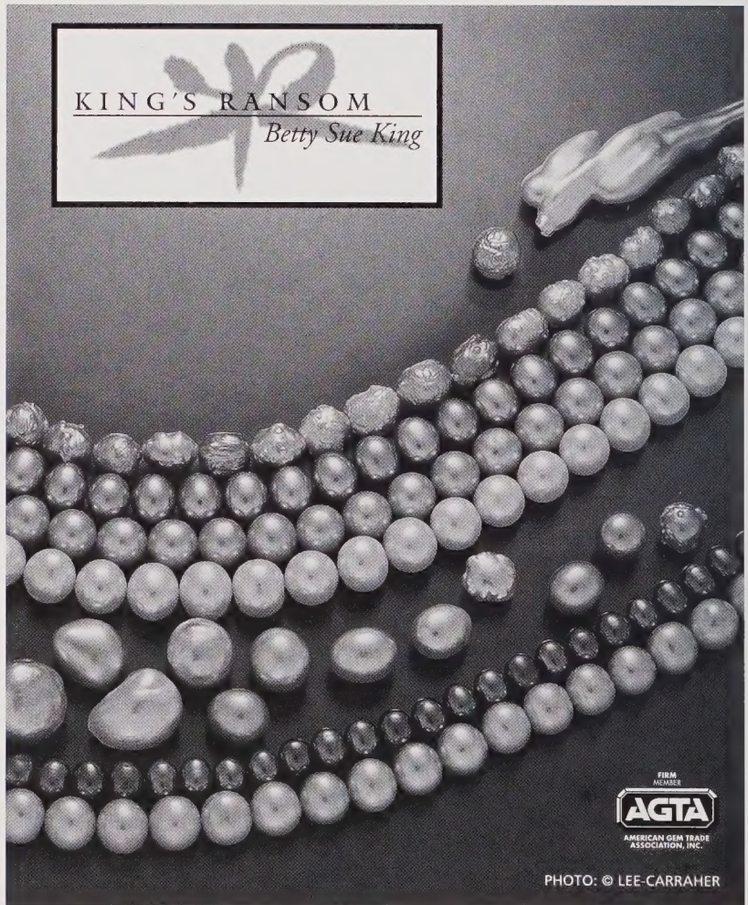

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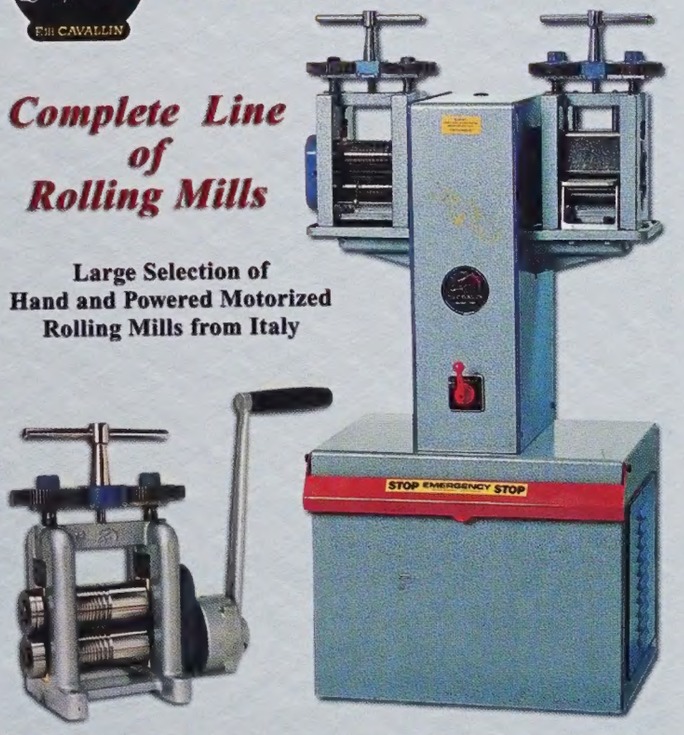

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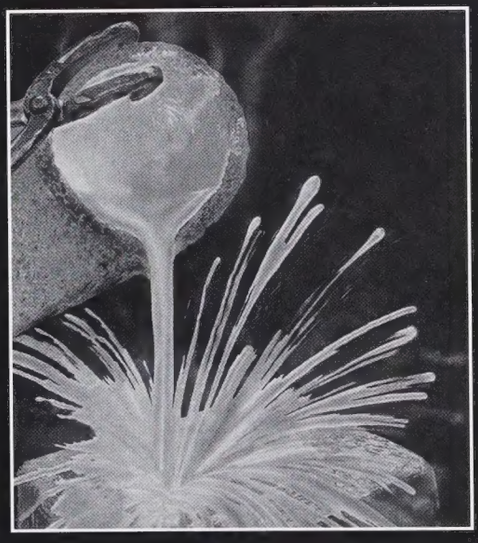

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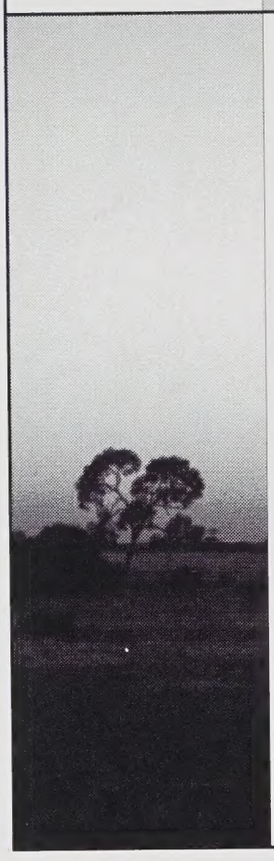

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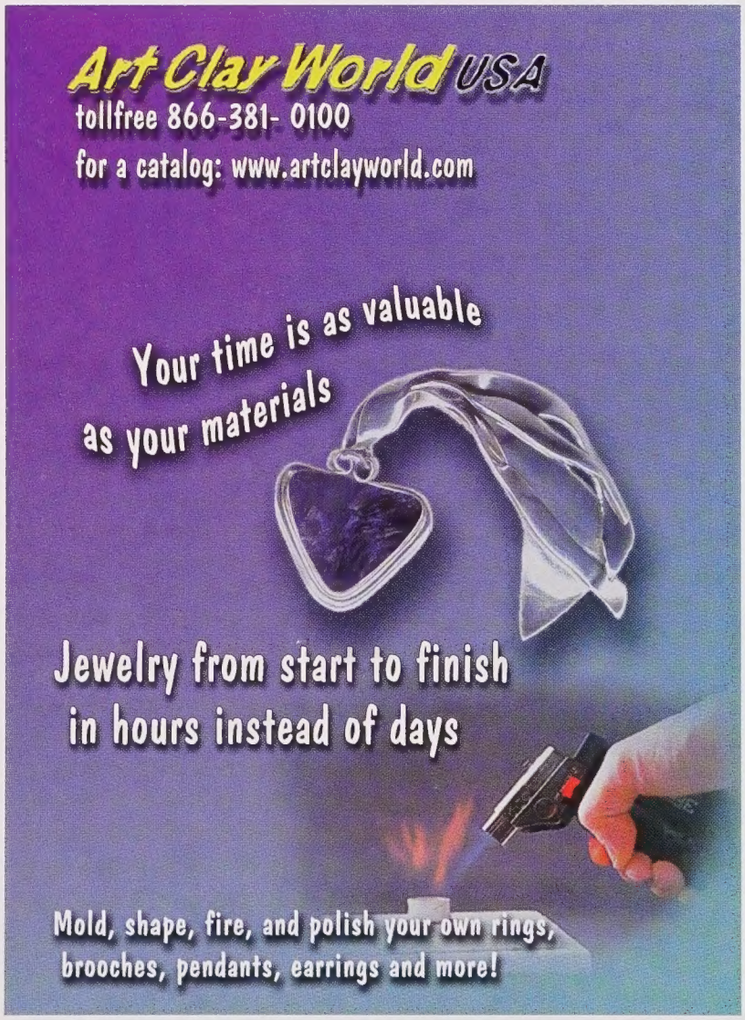
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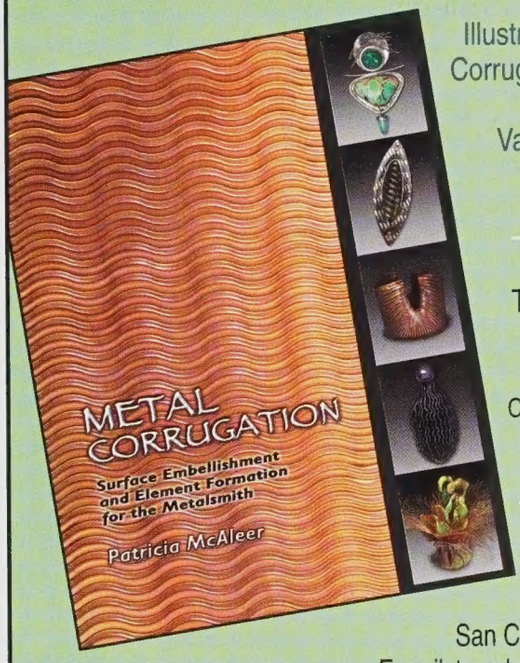

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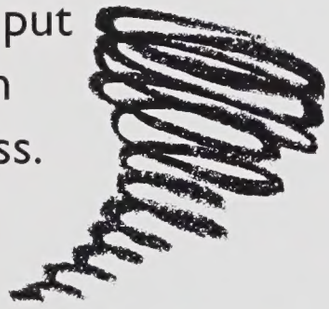

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95 / 5% Ruthenium
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Deoxidized Karat Gold Casting Grain

CASTING	COLOR	ALLOY
10k	Yellow	with alloy 230
10k	Yellow	with alloy 285
10k	Yellow	with alloy 440
10k	Yellow	with alloy 837 (All Purpose)
10k	Yellow	with alloy VHF1
10k	Yellow	with alloy VHF2
10k	White	with alloy 930

CASTING	COLOR	ALLOY
14k	Yellow	with ultraloy UA1
14k	Yellow	with ultraloy UA3
14k	Yellow	with ultraloy UA5
14k	Yellow	with alloy 200
14k	Yellow	with alloy 220
14k	Yellow	with alloy 230
14k	Yellow	with alloy 440
14k	Yellow	with alloy 450
14k	Yellow	with alloy 480
14k	Yellow	with alloy 485
14k	Yellow	with alloy 630
14k	Yellow	with alloy 837 (All Purpose)
14k	Yellow	with alloy VHF2
14k	Yellow	with alloy VHF3
14k	Yellow	with alloy VHF4
14k	Yellow	#2 special no de-ox
14k	Yellow	#3 special no de-ox
14k	White	with alloy 860 (All Purpose)
14k	White	with alloy 915
14k	White	with alloy 925
14k	White	with alloy 970
14k	White	with alloy PD1 Palladium
14k	White	#900 Boron deoxidized, casting
14k	White	#930
14k	Pink	#540 all purpose pink
14k	Green	#570 all purpose green

CASTING	COLOR	ALLOY
18k	Yellow	#720
18k	Yellow	#760
18k	Yellow	#780
18k	Yellow	#792
18k	White	#900 Boron deoxidized
18k	White	#930
18k	White	with alloy 880 (All Purpose)
18k	White	with alloy 915
18k	White	with alloy PD2 Palladium

Cadmium Free Solder

Repair Gold Solder

Costume and Low Karat

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
6Y X-Easy	1310° F
6Y Easy	1345° F
6W Easy	1390° F
8Y Easy	1350° F

10 Karat Work

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
10Y Easy	1340° F
10Y Medium	1395° F
10Y Hard	1475° F
10W Easy	1365° F
10W Medium	1425° F
10W Hard	1550° F
12Y Easy	1368° F

14 Karat Work

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
14Y X-Easy	1295° F
14Y Easy	1395° F
14Y Med	1380° F
14Y Hard	1471° F
14W X-Easy	1320° F
14W Easy	1380° F
14W Med	1440° F
14W Hard	1570° F

18 Karat Work (Repair Gold Solder)

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
18Y Easy	1425° F
18Y Med	1495° F
18Y Hard	1535° F
18W Easy	1465° F
18W Med	1495° F
18W Hard	1590° F
20W Weld	1610° F

Plumb Gold Solders

Low Karat Solders

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
6KYP Easy	1350° F
8KYP X-Easy	1340° F
8KYP Easy	1360° F
8KWP Easy	1420° F

10 Karat Solders

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
10KYP X-Easy	1305° F
10KYP Easy	1375° F
10KYP Medium	1400° F
10KYP Hard	1475° F
10KWP Easy	1390° F
10KWP Medium	1435° F
10KWP Hard	1570° F
10KP Green	1400° F
10KP Pink	1550° F

12 Karat Solders

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
12KYP Easy	1410° F
12KYP Medium	1460° F
12KYP Hard	1500° F
12KWP Medium	1425° F

14 Karat Solders

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
14KYP X-Easy	1295° F
14KYP Easy	1340° F
14KYP Medium	1390° F
14KYP Hard	1480° F
14KYP X-Hard	1540° F
14KWP X-Easy	1320° F
14KWP Easy	1390° F
14KWP Medium	1450° F
14KWP Hard	1570° F
14KP Green	1430° F
14KP Pink	1560° F

18 Karat Solders

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
18KYP Easy	1430° F
18KYP Medium	1475° F
18KYP Hard	1550° F
18KWP Easy	1460° F
18KWP Hard	1610° F
18KP Green	1450° F
18KP Pink	1600° F
19KWP Weld	1685° F

Silver Solders

TYPE	FLOW TEMP.
S X-Easy	1300° F
S Soft	1325° F
S Medium	1390° F
S Hard	1475° F
S X-Hard	1540° F

Platinum Solders

1000° C - 1700° C

Platinum Plumb Solders

1300° C Easy – 90% PT
1400° C Medium – 92.5% PT
1500° C Hard – 95% PT

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Double Bank Custom Workbench
A larger work area with twice as many storage drawers as our standard John Frei workbench. Measures 62" wide by 26" deep and stands 38" tall. Shown in oak.

Bank of Drawers on Casters
These portable storage drawers are made by us to compliment the John Frei custom workbenches. Locking casters makes the bank of drawers easy to move around your shop. Shown in oak.
Measures: 18"W x 26"D x 38"H

John Frei Custom Workbench
Overall dimensions: Standard Design 49"W x 26"D x 38"H

Available Options

Simplified drawer lay outs for schools with individually locking drawers. Pull out layout board above locking door, pull out layout board beneath bench top, left hand bench, locking bank of drawers, custom finish/colors/or nude finish, block different locations, walnut or mahogany benches, GRS benchmate mounted in place of bench pin. Also double bank custom workbench. Contact us for your free full color benches selection guide. Or call for specialized design quote for your studio.

Detail *Four inch square hardened steel anvil block with bench pin, pull out tool tray with cut out for engravers block, two sturdy pull out arm rests, stain steel lined catch tray slides in and out.*

Detail *Locking top door with integral bur tray, two concealed security drawers, raised lip around bench top, two inch thick butcher block top.*

Two Station Custom Workbench
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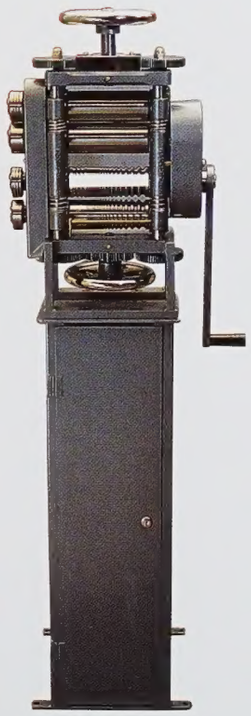

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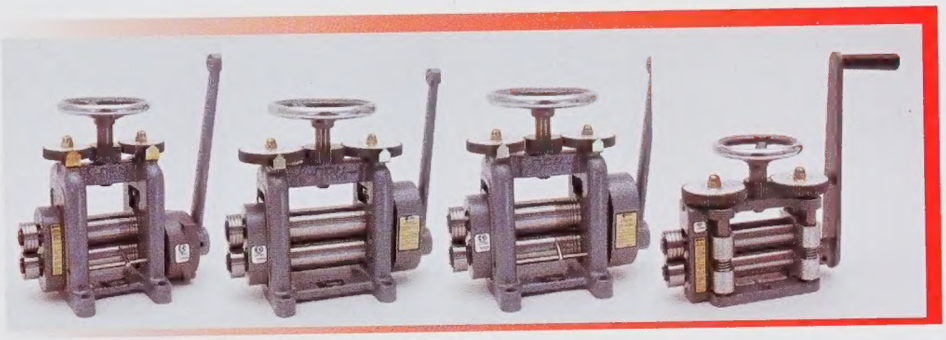

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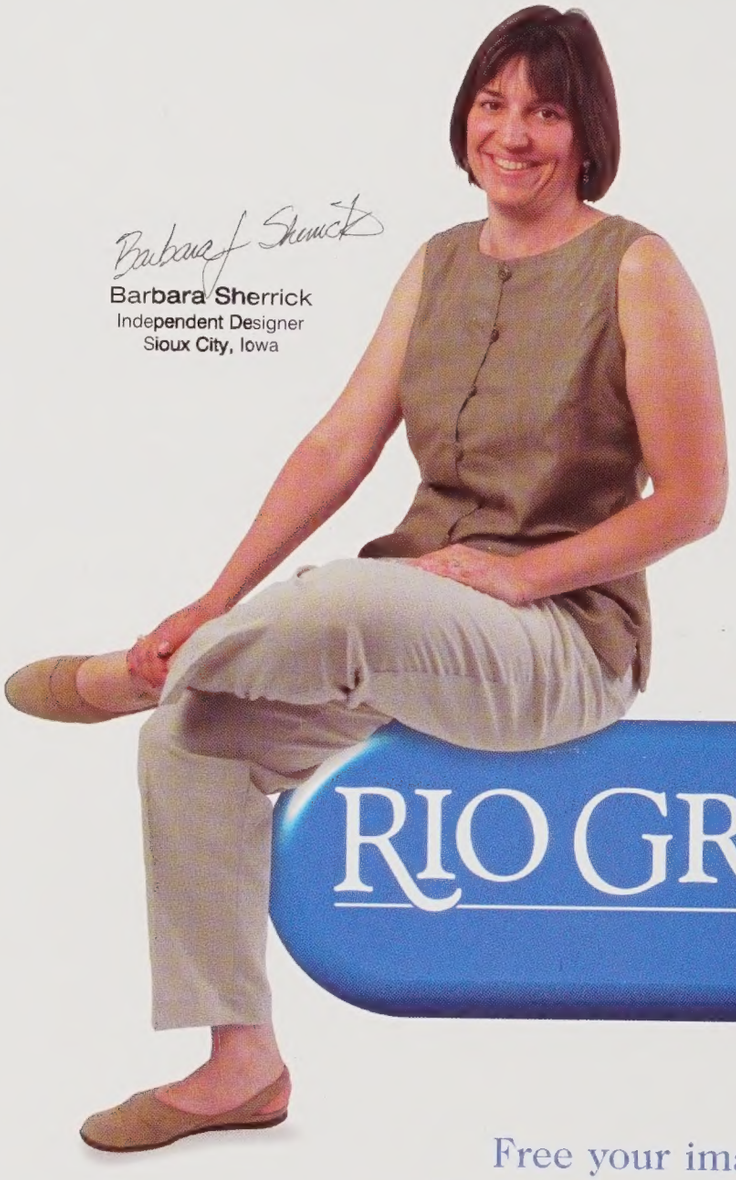

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